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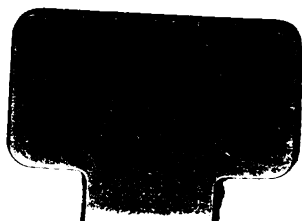
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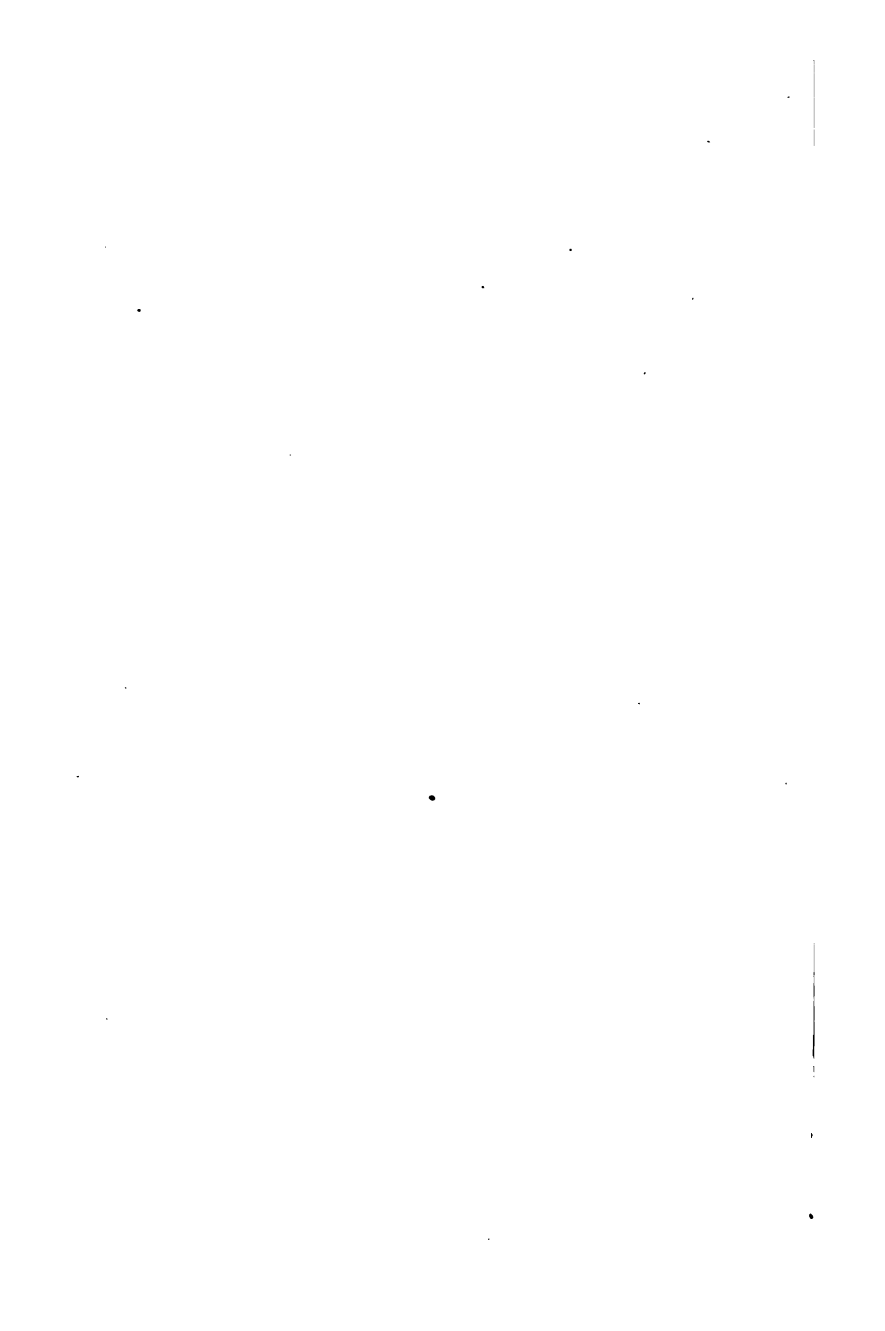
Thoughts on
Sabbath Schools
BY
HUGH BARCLAY



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THOUGHTS
ON
SABBATH SCHOOLS

(REVISED FROM THE "EDINBURGH CHRISTIAN MAGAZINE,"
AND PUBLISHED SEPARATELY BY REQUEST)

BY
HUGH BARCLAY

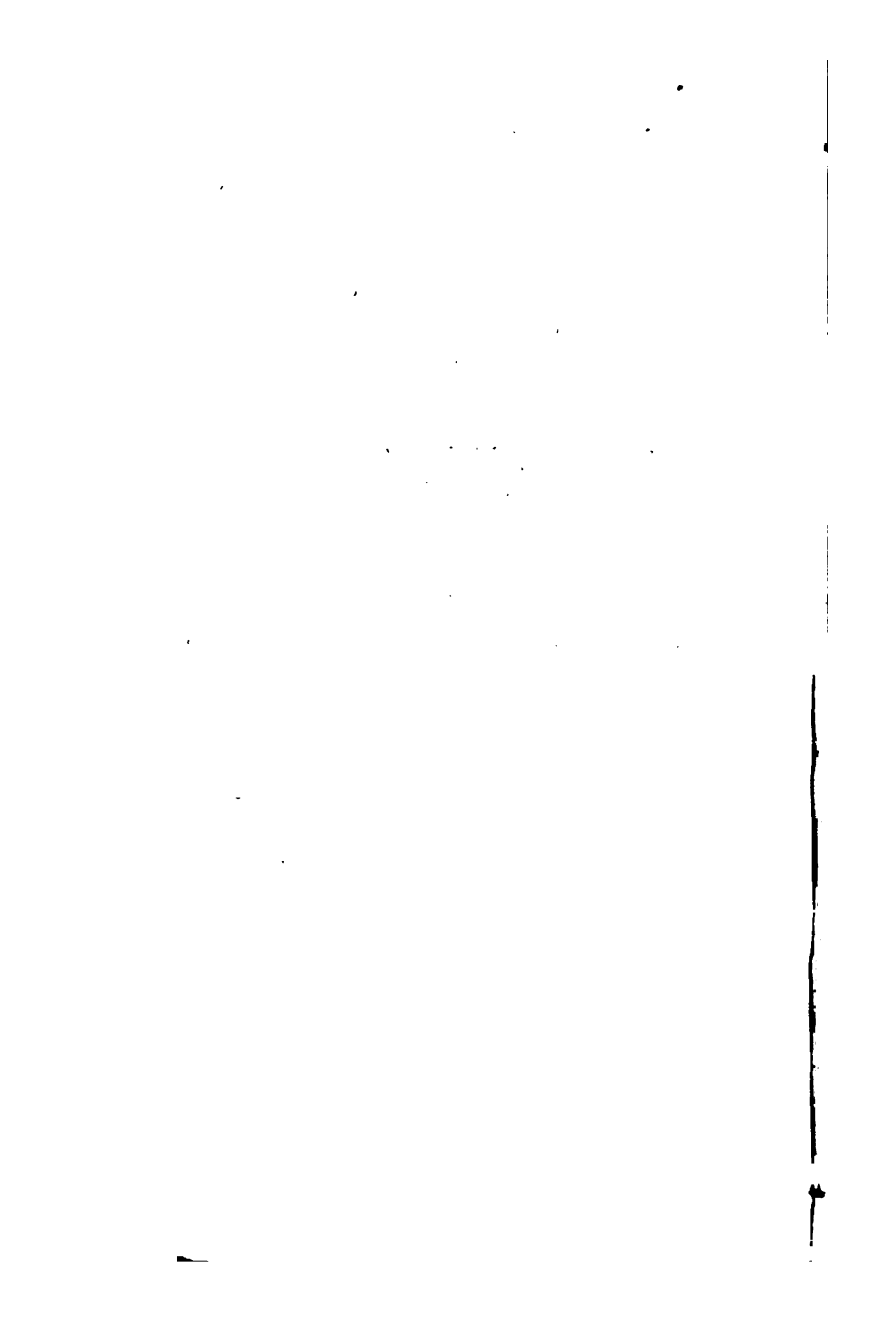
"Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your hearts. And ye shall TEACH
THEM YOUR CHILDREN."—DEUT. xi. 18, 19.

"Lift up thy hands toward Him for the life of thy young CHILDREN."—LAM. ii. 19.

"THE CHILDREN crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David."—
MATTH. xxi. 15.

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THOUGHTS ON SABBATH SCHOOLS.

PART I.

THE CONNEXION BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND THE SABBATH SCHOOL.

"Then Hezekiah commanded to prepare *chambers* in the house of the Lord; and they prepared them."—"To give to their brethren by courses, as well to the great as to the *small*; besides their genealogy of males, from *three years old* and upward, even unto every one that entereth into the house of the Lord, his *daily* portion for their service in their charges, according to their courses."—2 CHRON. xxxi. 11, 15, 16.

THE time has now gone past when a portion of our Christian ministry looked coldly, if not with unfavourable and suspicious eye, on the Sabbath school. We must not, however, judge uncharitably of those who so thought and acted, or impute to them motives which they did not themselves avow, if they did not actually disclaim. It may have been with many of them that there was no latent hostility to Gospel teaching, or the godly upbringing of the young, but a well-grounded conviction that this duty, in the *first* place, devolved on Christian parents; and that the best and most appropriate Sabbath school was, as it still is, the family hearth; and the best of human instrumentality, the Holy

Scriptures and the Assembly Catechisms, taught from a father's mouth. This is, doubtless, a duty which no parent can perform by *proxy*; but it is, nevertheless, one in the performance of which the best of parents may have his hands strengthened, and his work made easier and more successful by well-adapted auxiliaries.

Perhaps some of the objectors might have entertained an undefined jealousy of lay teaching in the province of religion. Others might fear that the *secular* might, in time, predominate over the *religious* element in the instructions given; and that the children might carry more of the week-day school into that of the Sabbath, than of the latter into the former. But we have reason for gratitude to the Great Teacher that, in this respect, the *Sabbath* school of Scotland has ever stood out in bold and holy contrast with the *Sunday* school of England; and that the sacred hours of the Scotch Sabbath school have been wholly devoted to the same object as those of the sanctuary,—the teaching of the Gospel of God's Son.

This class of objectors, at one time formidable, but losing strength every successive year, had tarried behind the age. They had not heeded the slow, silent, but sure advances of the tide of population, with its large masses drained from the rural districts, collected into the mighty reservoirs of great towns, and there mingled with the muddy and bitter waters of sin and vice. These worthy men, seated in their quiet studies in the country, and doing to

the best of their abilities their duty to their children and domestics, with a blind charity supposed that all others in this Christian country were alike alive to a sense of duty, and equally active in its discharge. They knew their little flocks of *hundreds*, and did their best to attend to their early culture and more advanced progress in divine life. They knew very little of the world beyond the sphere of their congregation. They knew nothing of the large manufacturing towns which had been rapidly superinduced upon rural villages, and of the large parishes containing many villages of industry recently sprung into existence.

The Christian Church and the Government, alike to blame, stood aside in apathy, and saw the population thus rapidly increasing in numbers, and progressive in everything but in that which alone constitutes a nation's true greatness—its *righteousness*. The sheep were scattered without a pastor, and oftentimes became a ready prey to the false teacher. Even in the people's proneness to embrace error, there was evidence of the void within, and the innate craving of the soul for sustenance. The generation of Sabbath-domestic-teaching parents passed away, and with them that hallowed hour of family worship, when Christ, invoked, himself stood within each humble circle, and spoke peace to every heart, realizing His gracious promise, that "Wherever two or three were met in His name there would He be in the midst of them."

The lack of godly teaching in the family produced

a great increase of ungodly practice in the land ; and as the lamp of domestic devotion and piety grew dimmer, and was wellnigh extinguished, the louder should have been the call that the flame on the altar in the temple might burn the brighter, and shed its lambent flame the wider. It was the duty of the Christian ministry and the Christian people to fill the gaps which neglect of national and parental duty, and consequent sin, had made in the hedge of the garden of the Lord. The age of miracles had gone past, and the world now existed under the discipline and dispensation of the ordinary means of grace ; but which, with a blessing, had always the assurance of the same happy result. If children had been lost to the Christian Church by neglect of parental duty, the remedy lay in the supply of that neglect by the Church of Christ.

Through the regeneration of the children, by divine blessing, it was not in vain to expect to restore the parental ascendancy in another generation. Just as when in a city conflagration the water-engines are too late to save the fabric in flames, it is wisely sought to prevent the spread of the devouring element by directing every effort on the vicinage. The inroads of Mammon on the quiet tenor of domestic life drove out the sacred duties of family. Many parents had not the necessary time left, neither strength nor ability given them, to perform the duties of religious culture to their offspring, and, alas ! still more did most of them want the will to discharge those sacred duties. To these neglected young ones the Christian Church stood in

the position of foster-father. Successive myriads of these religious outcasts, and waifs, as it were, on the social stream, were swept down the broad flood of time that rapidly ran on to the ocean of eternity. The Church of Christ was not to stand sullenly and unconcerned on the river's brink, and heedlessly see her innocents thus submerged in sin and immorality, and hurried on to a dread destruction. Like the daughter of Egypt's king, her heart was moved, and her hand was stretched to rescue from the gulf; and, handing the rescued to the Sabbath school, she found it both her interest and duty to give the encouraging command: "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages."

The doubters of Sabbath school influence did not then perceive how important an auxiliary to the Christian Church was the Sabbath school, and how important an officer in the Church of the New Testament was the Sabbath school teacher. It ought ever to have been viewed as a lovely shrub, protected under the wide-spreading branches of the Christian Church, instead of being carelessly thrown over its hedge to grow out-field, by her, long unheeded and uncared for. In later and happier days, the importance and scriptural character of Sabbath schools have been authoritatively and frequently recognized by every Christian Church, and the seal of its sanction given to their charter. Whatever may be the diversity of zeal and corresponding amount of success in different churches, there is reason to believe that there is now no

pastor in a Christian Church who would lift his voice in opposition to this handmaid to the Church's preaching and vocation.

We would venture to urge on pastors of all denominations the importance of dealing with the Sabbath school as an integral portion of the Christian Church, and in immediate connexion with her ecclesiastical office-bearers. There is not in Christian, as in Pagan, schemes of religious education, an esoteric and exoteric. There is not in the practice of our holy faith, home and foreign truths. There is not one divine system for the priest, and another for the people. The same Gospel that saves the peasant, is the only passport of salvation to the Prince. The same faith which is the principle of life in the patriarch, is that which breathes life and health into the infant breast. The Church of Christ recognizes no vital distinction between things internal and external. The outside and the inside of her cup and platter are alike devoted to the glory of her God, and must alike be kept cleansed in purity. The closer that the tie is drawn between the Church and the Sabbath school, the more healthy and beneficial will be the action of those religious nurseries, and the greater benefit added to the Church and its grand object—the Christianity of the masses.

The benefits of this connexion will be reciprocal. The Church and congregation will, with thanksgiving, give glory to God for the good done to the young, and feel it incumbent, by their conduct

and demeanour, to aid, and not to mar the lessons taught their children in the Sabbath school. There is no mode of reaching the heart of parents so direct as through kindness shewn to their offspring. There is no hold more firm on their affections than a sense of some favour done to a son or daughter. Of the superintendence of the Church, we are not content with a bare approval, or an occasional visit to the schoolroom by the minister or elders, or an annual soiree or sermon to the young. These may be, and indeed are, all good in their way and place, but fall far short of the *identity* of the school with the Church. We look at the school as the porch of the Church—as the first steps to the altar. The Sabbath school roll is the communion roll in prospect; the names therein recorded ought to be viewed as those of communicants in germ or in bud—the novices and catechumens of the Church. The minister's best communion class is the Sabbath school, commencing with the lisping answer to the question, "Who made you?" or, when a little further advanced, to that more comprehensive initiatory and expansive question, "What is the chief end of man?" and ending with the minister's Bible-class, where the more lofty truths of our holy faith come with appropriateness and without difficulty to the mind, which, Timotheus-like, had from childhood been under Scripture teaching.

Each church and congregation is a unity. Like the Temple, it may have many apartments of diverse capacities. Like heaven itself, it may have many

mansions. There is but one great circle of truth, though capable of many sectional divisions. But all tending to, and uniting in, one Christian centre—Christ himself. The Christian Church is but one great school of Christ and His Prophets. The minister is the Rector, or Head Master. The Elders are so many Ushers or Masters, who help him in the discipline and education of the adult or senior classes. The Sabbath school teachers are Monitors or Assistant teachers, who superintend the instruction of the juvenile and infant classes up from the very alphabet of religious knowledge. The pupils are all under the eye and care of the pastor, and pass from one form to another, until, at the table of the Lord, they take a Christian diploma, or degree in Christianity. It may be necessary, in large parishes or congregations, to have local or district schools. But no church ought to be without its congregational classes, met within the very walls of the church. Accustomed to the sacred duties discharged in that place, a solemn feeling of the identity of the instructions of the class with those of the church, will have an appreciable influence on the youthful mind. Thus levity and carelessness are more apt to be destroyed from the tender mind, than when the classes are assembled in week-day schoolrooms, or places still less connected with educational or religious purposes.

The Pastor and his Elders ought to make it *duty* to be present at the Sabbath school, and assiduous in their superintending care of the young,

who will soon learn to consider *that* subject to be of importance which men, whom they are accustomed to reverence, appear to reckon so very material for their wellbeing. The Pastor with his Elders ought periodically to meet with the teachers, to hear Reports of what is doing, and still more of what remains to be done, in the congregation, parish, or locality, and to unite in prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on teacher and taught, by which alone can the assurance be that the seed is good, and sown in good soil; and that, so watered, it may take root downwards, and spring upwards, yielding fruit unto life eternal.

The congregation ought always to have an opportunity, at least once on every Sabbath, of uniting in this prayer. The best sympathies of the congregation would, through the tender, but sure tie of supplication, be thus enlisted for the "lambs of the flock;" and no deeper *Amen* would be responded to any petition than that of "*Feed thy lambs.*" Nothing would more identify the Church and the school—the congregation and the classes—the parents and the children—than this constant concert in prayer. It would be thus proclaimed to the people and the world, that the godly upbringing of the young is part and parcel of the duty of a Christian Church, which she dare not indorse to another, or commit to mere secular auxiliaries—that the Sabbath school is an integral part of Church economy, and no mere outpost—that it is an indigenous plant, and no exotic, in her garden. The best inscription over the gate of the Sabbath school is: "*This is the way to the*

Church ;" and the best text which could be inscribed on her door-posts, would be : " When the child is weaned, then I will bring him to the Temple, that he may appear before the Lord, and there abide for ever."

PART II.

THE TEACHERS.

"Whosoever he be of thy seed in their generations *that hath any blemish*, let him not approach to offer the bread of his God."—LEV. xxi. 17.

"Let these also first be proved, then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless."—1 TIM. iii. 10.

THE Psalmist, under divine inspiration, puts, and at the same time answers a question thus: "Wherewithal shall a *young* man cleanse *his way*? By taking heed thereto according to *Thy Word*." Never was more important question put; never was answer so short and yet so satisfactory. Old and young are spiritually unclean, and therefore both need spiritual cleansing. But it is the *young* who are here represented as especially the objects of this cleansing process. The *aged* sinner, into whose nature sin has become engrained and hardened, seldom asks this question; and though we are assured that no limits can be assigned to sovereign grace, yet of such may it be truly said: "He is joined to his idols, let him alone;" "He which is filthy, let him be filthy still." The question is only put with regard to *youth*; and the answer is, that he must "*think* on his ways," or "*consider* his ways;" and take for his only guide, rule, and compass for the voyage of life, "God's Word."

So *young* men ought to be pre-eminently persons of *thought*; the *object* of their thoughts ought to be "their *ways*;" and the only rule of their ways, "*God's Word*." Therefore of the wicked it is said: "God is not in all their THOUGHTS."

We cannot expect that those can rightly guide others in any way who do not themselves *know* that way; and there is no surer mode of leading another directly to any place, than by going alongside, step by step, with the stranger-pilgrim,—avoiding every kind of pitfall, and firmly planting the foot on the stepping-stones across the deep waters. To risk the way with any other guide, is to fall into error, it may be, into ruin;—it would be to set the blind to lead the blind, with the almost certainty of both falling into the ditch.

Nothing can exceed the importance of Sabbath school teachers as a class; and their *best*—we had almost said their *sole*—qualification is their deep, sound, and practical *personal piety*, evidenced by their *daily* (not merely their *Sabbath-day*) walk and conversation as living epistles of Christ, seen and read of all men, especially by their Sabbath pupils. We may have an energetic pastor, sound in the faith, and zealous in discharge of all his duties. We may have a goodly phalanx of Sabbath school teachers. We may have numerous and well-located schoolrooms, and a large muster-roll of children attending well and regularly, and ever attentive while attending. But let the teachers, as a class, be destitute of the Christian

essential of personal piety—unprotected with the Christian armour—and we doubt much whether the scheme may not be an *incubus* on the Christian Church, rather than its vanguard and glory. Nay, so far do we carry our principle, that we dread the admission of even one ungodly member into our teachers' ranks. One dead fly may destroy the whole pot of the apothecary's, otherwise, sweet and costly ointment—one diseased sheep may contaminate a whole flock—one unseemly stone may deface the most splendid edifice—one Achan may bring a curse on a whole encampment—one Jonah in a ship may cause a tempest in the sea.

It is recorded of a Master of Rhetoric in olden time, that he propounded that there were only *three* great requisites to the perfect Orator. When asked what was the first?—he answered, *Delivery*. What was the second?—he responded, *Delivery*. And what the third?—he still replied, *Delivery*. So we would propound that there are three great requisites necessary to form the perfect Sabbath school teacher. If asked, What is the first?—we answer, *Piety*. What the second?—*Piety* is still our ready reply. If asked to name the third, we can but repeat the delightful word, *Piety*.

Ask us for the rule or training to make a Sabbath school teacher, and we desire you to turn to the twelfth verse of the fifty-first Psalm; it will be found there in these significant words of prayer: "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with

thy free Spirit." What, then,—what is to follow this spiritual restoration—this heavenly support? Hear the inevitable result: "*Then* will I TEACH transgressors thy way; and sinners SHALL be converted unto thee."

This "*then*" is an important word in the text; it is as if it were said, Let me have *these* divine qualifications and influences, and *then* I cannot help being a *teacher* of transgressors,—a Sabbath school teacher. Like Andrew, having myself found Messiah, I feel constrained straightway to go to my brethren and bring them to Jesus. *Without* such personal and spiritual qualification, I have no call—no commission—no warrant—no hope or assurance of success. If I seek to *teach* spiritually, before being myself spiritually *taught*, I labour in vain—I am as one who beateth the air—I go a warfare on my own charges—I run without being sent—the Master disowneth me; and in the great examination of the world He may, in answer to my boastful recommendation—"I have *taught* in thy name"—reply: "I know thee not; I never knew thee."

We fear that the honour and the importance of the office itself are often undervalued; and that, therefore, the vital importance of the qualifications for the office is too little cared for. By one class of persons who have time in abundance on their hands—and who perhaps possess talents beside—the office is thought mean and unsuitable. Sad, it may be sinful, mistake! Those whom Christ took to His bosom and blessed,

cannot be thus flung heedlessly from the arms of His followers. Those who thus act, imitate the selfish and supercilious disciples, who jealously chide the ardent mothers that sought to bring their little ones to Jesus, that He might bless them, and whom their divine Master, moved by another spirit, justly visited by censure, with the ever-memorable words: "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." That class can never be indifferent to a Christian, of whom the Great Teacher, taking one and placing him in the midst, told the whole band of apostles to look on its infant form and gentle face as emblematical of *His* kingdom. There can be but little love to the Saviour in those who turn a deaf ear to His last command on earth ere He ascended to glory: "*Feed my lambs*;" and who think it enough that they have sought—or imagine they have sought—spiritual food for themselves on the finest of the wheat, and leave the lambs to feed on the husks, or crumbs which fall from their table; or entrust them to the hireling and the stranger, to feed them with food not convenient,—yea, often with the poisonous herbs of the desert—the grapes of Sodom, and not of Eshcol.

The work is indeed *mighty*; but then the *Almighty* is present in answer to the fervent prayer to help the weak, and "to perfect His strength in their weakness." It is a glorious work to be a fellow-worker with God. Even to be a hewer of wood or drawer of water in the service of the Lord, will not be despised by the

humble Gideonite of Christianity. But to be a polisher of the immortal and living stones which are to form part of the living temple of the living God—the New Jerusalem which is from above, with its golden streets, jewelled gates, and precious-stoned walls—its sunless, yet sunny and endless day.—Ah! here indeed is work that angels rejoice to share in, but which is left to the agency of men.

We urge on the *pious* youth of our congregations not to stand back. We enforce it as *duty*, the neglect of which will give pain, as sure as its performance will afford joy. But it is not on the footing of *duty* alone we would address those who are able, fit, and qualified; but on the higher ground of *privilege*—of *Christian privilege*. It is truly said, that there is no better mode of *learning* any branch of science or study, than to *teach* it. This is equally true of religion, allowing always for its divine and *inward* teaching. Be assured, it is true in *spiritual* husbandry, that none can water the garden of another's heart, and leave his own dry and parched; or plant flowers in another's pathway, while wandering himself amidst thorns and thistles. We urge, therefore, on all who *can* work in the Sabbath school, to *try* the work, and to become a *willing* worker in God's great work. Let no one despise the work as mean. It is God's own work. It is part of the plan of man's salvation, into which even the angels desire to look, and rejoice in heaven over every new stone, however small, which is added

to the heavenly building. Let no one either heedlessly pass by the spiritually bleeding child, stretched helplessly on the other side of the highway of life, or stamp himself of the tribe of Cain, by the self-gratulatory interrogation: "Am I my brother's keeper?" The lanes and closes of our large towns afford a better field for Christian enterprise than the recovery of the supposititious tomb of the Saviour, which, for ages, drew hosts from the utmost limits of Europe, to rescue this empty trophy from infidel hands. Young men! buckle on your Christian armour. Take the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit. Unite yourselves to the army of the living God,—fight the good fight of faith. Up for the crown, rather than for the tomb of the Saviour. A living, and not a dead Christ, is your watchword. The swaddling-clothes of the living and loving Child are more precious in your sight than the grave-clothes He left behind. March every day, and seven times every seventh day, around the walls of the spiritual Jericho. Let the shout of your prayer of faith ascend, and the Lord will give you the city.

We thus urge on the *pious* youth of our churches, of both sexes, to join in the good work of Sabbath school teaching. If there be a lack of *qualified* teachers, and the work either not done, or done inefficiently, and you prefer self-indulgence and temporal ease, to dividing your spiritual bread with the hungry, perishing for lack of nourishment, see to it that you are innocent of your brother's blood, or that the ensanguined tide crieth

not from the ground, a witness against your spiritual neglect. Herod-like, you sacrifice the children, that you may dwell at ease, and be rid of the annoyance of their cry for help. David-like, you dwell in houses of cedar, while the ark of the living God is still in tents. We cannot promise that you will not have labour in the work of preparation—annoyance from froward and rebellious pupils—and many discomforts. We would not deceive you. We promise all these, and with usury. But if you enter on the *duty* with self-denial, self-abasement, and God-dedication, we promise you profit and pleasure,—a recompense and a reward which the world cannot give nor take away. The hours spent in the Sabbath school will afford sweet subjects of reflection for days and years,—aye, oft on the pillow of death, when many expensive pageants of this world's recreation and magnificence will leave nought but painful remembrance of time misspent, talents misapplied, and money laid out without return, save in bitter remorse.

Whilst we thus urge on all *duly-qualified* youth to unite themselves in this honourable cause, we as urgently dissuade the *unqualified* from undertaking the office, and the Managers of Sabbath schools from accepting their more than useless aid. We do fear that much harm has been often inflicted on this sacred cause from want of *discrimination* in this respect. Whilst a mistaken diffidence and mistrust may have withheld many *well qualified* for labouring in this extensive field, we do fear that more have entered

it without a due regard to the nature, and importance, and end, of the great work. We fear that the lack of teachers has often occasioned a sort of spiritual press-gang, who have shipped into the Gospel vessel many a landsman totally unacquainted either with the language or the learning of the Gospel crew—practically unacquainted with the only sure chart—the Bible—and who never themselves personally felt the full force of truth, or enjoyed the comfort of the only unerring pilot—the Holy Spirit. We require all the qualifications of Christian conduct and character in the *Teacher*, that we demand in the *Preacher*, of God's Word. We desire to keep back profane hands from touching the ark of God, whether these be the hands of leaders or of followers in the Christian camp.

Again, we fear that, in some quarters, it has not been altogether unknown, that Sabbath school teaching was held *fashionable*, and a passport into the world of a *fashionable Christianity*. Alas! Sabbath school duty must be an unfitting introduction to the assembly room. The theatre is a miserable preparation for the Sabbath school! But such instances are not altogether unknown; and, if known to the pupils, most readily will they reckon the *practical* value of *spiritual* instruction from such a source. It is too true, that many who have taught Sabbath schools have made shipwreck of their faith, (if they ever had so valuable a cargo,) and brought disgrace on the Christian profession. Christ has been too often

wounded in the house of His friends. "*Deliver me from my friends!*" is no unmeaning solecism. We have seen painful statistics of the many Sabbath school *pupils* who afterwards became inmates of prisons. We never have seen statistics of how many Sabbath school *teachers* left their first love, (granting it to have been love,) and proved to the world that it had no abiding root. Better far that we should have fewer schools and fewer children, or that the few teachers should be over-tasked and over-worked, and the children half but scripturally taught, than have our teachers pulling down, by their conduct and conversation throughout the week, what they vainly attempted to build up on a Sabbath hour, with unskilful hands and untempered mortar. We had rather have a *hundred* children under *one*, Timotheus-like, instructed from his youth in the Scriptures, and illumined by the Spirit of God, than a *thousand* children under the tuition of a *hundred* teachers, a tithe of whom had given no satisfactory *evidence* of their being the disciples or scholars of *Him* in whose school they now desire to be masters,—forgetting that the master must himself first be a disciple. In the former case, we should expect the *Spirit* and the *blessing of God*, that He would raise up helpmates to the "*man of God*." His pupils, with such divine instruction, would soon become their master's assistants—then their master's colleagues; and there have been some cases where, even with higher gifts and graces, the pupil has become his master's master and preceptor. In the other case,

there may be handfuls of the good seed sown, but mingled with omers of chaff, or—what is worse—with tares, and together thrown broadcast in stony ground, by the wayside, or amongst thorns and thistles.

Let us not be misunderstood. We do not depreciate talent. Far from it. But it is *sanctified talent* we prize and desire. *Sanctification* is heaven's mint-stamp, which alone gives value to the currency of Christian *profession*. Talent without this Christian quality, is all the more dangerous when put into the position of the Christian instructor. The seat of the Gospel teacher may thus become the "chair of the scorner." Talent in combination with piety, is our object. But give us our choice, and we would, for our work, prefer piety with slender talents, rather than gigantic talents with slender and shallow piety. Zeal, too, we admire and wish; but there is a zeal which is as the crackling of thorns under a pot, which flashes for a moment, and then leaves the contents of the vessel as cold as ever. So, too, there may be a zeal which goes forth with trumpet sound, compassing sea and land to make one proselyte, and yet has not carried heat to one cold heart. Zeal is a good quality; so, too, is knowledge. "Zeal without knowledge," is an *ignis fatuus*, leading men astray into the bogs of error. "Knowledge without zeal," is a talent hid in a napkin, which neither brings benefit to its so-called owner, nor to his fellowmen; but is "*of the earth, earthy.*"

What we urge is, that the directors of Sabbath

schools should be prudently, nay, timidly, cautious in the appointment of teachers. It is not those who are most forward to offer their services whose services are the most valuable ; neither are those who undervalue their talents those whose weight in the scales of the sanctuary is least. The weights of the temple were double those of the market-place. Personal feelings and delicacy ought ever to be cautiously consulted. The invitation should not be rashly made, and (as we have seen in our experience) thereafter, on further inquiry and more mature deliberation, withdrawn ; and violence thus unnecessarily done to private character and feelings. Let the name of the proposed teacher be mentioned first to the minister or directors, and ample time for inquiry and deliberation be given. Let the inquiries be made privately and discreetly as to his qualifications, in every respect, for the work. Let none be impressed into the work against his will ; and no volunteer accepted without knowledge of his suitableness for being a soldier of the Cross. The person being first approved, let him be conversed with in private—by the minister or some of the older directors—as to his knowledge, his faith, and his personal interest in the great work of the Christian education and godly upbringing of the young. If he has never had experience of the great work, let him attend some nights at the school. Let him be with several teachers, and with different classes of both sexes, and of several ranks in life, that he may learn all the difficulties, as well as *disagreements*, of the work.

Let him attempt to teach in presence of some one of experience; and so, with every allowance for our tyro, let it be seen whether he has the great essential of "aptness to teach," without which knowledge is as gold in a glass hermetically sealed. It is still gold, but gold excluded from the air of heaven. With these and similar safeguards, let him be finally and formally enrolled in the list of teachers. Let him feel that an honour from the Church has been done, and a Christian privilege conferred upon him, rather than the schools and the Church should appear to stand indebted to him. Whilst we recommend that the young of both sexes may, so soon as they appear so far qualified, prove useful helps, as assistants, in hearing the lessons, and keeping order and discipline, we earnestly and advisedly recommend that no teacher should be at the head or have the management of, a class, to inculcate on their tender and impressive minds Christian doctrine and practice, who has not himself, or herself, given the example and pledge of Christian obedience, by uniting with the visible Church in the sacrament of the holy communion; and who, by age, has, humanly speaking, acquired a degree in Christian knowledge, some amount of Christian experience, and has outlived the epoch of youthful frivolities, passions, and vanities.

Much injury has been done to Sabbath school teaching by admitting to the rank of teachers juveniles whose principles were not firmly founded and tested by experience, nor their knowledge suffi-

ciently extensive to reach the doubts and difficulties which shoot up too early in the inquisitive mind of youth. We only add, that so anxious do we feel in constituting a Sabbath school teacher an office-bearer in the church, that we would wish his admission to the office consecrated by the special prayers of his minister and associates in this labour of love. Such solemn inauguration, or dedication, would deeply impress on his mind, (as well as recall it to the minds of others,) that he had undertaken a *spiritual* avocation, and that his record was on high; and from that quarter he must ever and unceasingly look for supplies of grace, and for means of success.

To return to *personal piety* as the first qualification for the Sabbath school teacher, we conclude the present paper by unhesitatingly stating, that the teacher who does not make his work the subject of *private devotion*, knows not the value of his work, and cares for it less. He either knows not, or undervalues, his enemies, and their power for evil. He goeth to war without reckoning the strength of his enemy within and without. He may labour ardently and incessantly; and yet, until he has besought a throne of grace, the windows of heaven may be shut to him, and its dews withheld, so that his labours may be in vain; and, sowing without faith and prayer, he may be left to reap without hope.

PART III.

THE TEACHING—ITS SUBJECT.

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations; . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you"—MATTH. xxviii, 19, 20.

IN our last paper we dwelt on those qualifications of the Sabbath school teacher in which we have the best guarantee for the kind and nature of the Sabbath school teaching. It is difficult to lay down precise rules, which may adapt themselves to all circumstances and occasions. But let us have the essential qualification of *piety in the teachers*; and in this we have the best security for the *pious teaching*, the godly upbringing of the young. This is just the line of argument for connecting schools with some Christian Church. The legislature may give what charters, educational constitutions, and laws, their wisdom may dictate; but place their administration in the hands of those who hate pure religion, or commit it to a mixed board, with less homogeneity than the feet of the image of the Babylonish monarch, and the strongest guarantees will be but as the gossamer web, to secure the essential of religious teaching, and the exclusion of *infidelity* under the thin disguise of *secularity*. "Give me," said a wise man, "*the making of a people's ballads, and I will leave to any one the making of their laws.*" Give us, respond we, the security of

piety in the schoolmaster, and we will let any one make the laws for the school. With this essential, religion would tinge every scholastic movement with the verdure of the Christian graces ; and without this, the most anxious and exact rules to ensure a permanent place for religion would be found an empty niche, or a shrine without a divinity—"a broken cistern which can hold no water." Such like *priest*, such like *people*—such like *preceptor*, such like *pupil*. As the level of the water stands in the fountain, so it will be found to rise no higher, however much it may be lower in the cistern. We fear lest the mental food and dainties supplied in the educational institutes of the land become the mixed products of a cunning human alchemy, pleasant to the depraved taste, or redolent to the vitiated smell, or beautiful to the dimmed eye, and therefore objects to be desired by the heart alienated from God. Rather let us have the living waters of the sanctuary,—“from the pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.”

Christianity is the subject of Sabbath school teaching. Christianity, again, is nothing but an empty name if Christ and Him crucified be not the alpha and omega of the whole teaching. The words, *school and scholar*, are apt to carry to the juvenile mind the occupations of the week-day school. The distinction must be early and constantly taught and exemplified between the week-day school and the Sabbath school, and the week-day scholar and the Sabbath scholar. These

are by no means antagonistic; but they are not identical, and are to be distinguished. Religion is not, and cannot, be *excluded* from the week-day school; and let vain man boast as he may, he cannot teach at all without teaching religion, either to admit or to ignore its facts and its truths—to love or to hate its holy precepts. He may as well attempt to fly from himself as attempt to shut out religion from any ordinary school administration. But there is this distinction, that on the Sabbath of the Lord, the Lord of the Sabbath ought to be the sole theme of teaching. The teaching of the week-day is chiefly directed to prepare mankind for the duties and occupations of *time*—of the world that is. On the Sabbath the teaching is chiefly directed to the more important concerns of *eternity*—of the spiritual world that is to come. The mortal body is the chief *subject* of the instructions of the former—the immortal soul the grand topic of the latter. The secular teacher deals chiefly with the *head* or *intellectual powers* of the pupil. He is continually saying: “All this have I proved by wisdom: I said, I will be wise,”—alas! how true the confession of the wise man: “But it was far from me. That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out?” The Sabbath teacher, on the other hand, has more for his *object* the *HEART*, or moral sentiments of his youthful charge. These objects, doubtless, are in close union the one with the other. The fearful sign of the present age is the vain attempt to divorce the one from the other—to put asunder

what God has indissolubly united. We believe, that when man came forth from creative power and wisdom, the thoughts and affections were in unison. Sin has so far dislocated this holy and happy union. Now, with the apostle we have all too much cause to record against ourselves, that "to *will* is present with us; but how to *perform* that which is good we find not: for the good that we would we do not; but the evil which we would not, that we do." Or, as a heathen poet has sung: "We know and approve the good, but follow the evil."

The secularist vainly seeks to *change* the *heart* by *improving* the *head*. The advocate for religion permeating the whole mass of education, seeks at once to *improve the whole man*—the physical, the mental, and the moral or spiritual. It was the *whole man* which was made after the image of God. It was a whole Christ who took on Him the whole image of man, that man might once more, through Him, be brought back to the image of God. The lover of Christ seeks to cherish the appointed means, with the promised blessing, to *reform*—to *regenerate* mankind. He teaches the necessity of the new birth, of a new heart, and a contrite spirit renewed within the youth of his charge. He who seeks to reach the *heart* through the *head*, has, in more respects than one, to work downward—to dig in the depths of human depravity. If he merely sharpens the intellect, but leaves the affections blunted, as before, the object of his solicitude may be made *cleverer* than before; but it

can scarcely be said that he has been made *better*. It was the old serpent which was the *most subtle* of any beast that the Lord God made. We despise not *head knowledge*, though, to the eye of the Christian, it is but the Corinthian capital which graces the pillar of truth. Mere intellect is as the *light* which causes foliage; but religion is as the *heat* which matures the fruit.

The aim of the Sabbath school teacher is, therefore, the HEART, the whole heart, and nothing but the heart. It is the HEART which is in enmity against God. It is there that the arch-enemy has encamped, and entrenched himself in sin and sense, and sought to dethrone the rightful and the righteous King, and to silence His vicegerent, the conscience. The Sabbath school teacher aims at reconquering the HEART to God, and bringing it back to its allegiance to the Lord of Hosts. It is possible for the Sabbath school teacher to gain the head, and impart an extensive and accurate knowledge of all the truths of our holy faith; but if his conquest is no deeper, he only gains an outpost;—it is merely *speculative*, not *practical* faith. His pupil wears the livery of the Christian soldier, but he wants the armour and the heart of the follower of the Cross. He has but a *name* to live, and does not *live for and unto the name*. The conquest is achieved only on the borders of the land, and it cannot be long held in sight of the enemy's stronghold. The territory is never more than debateable land. A truce is all that has been made with the enemy. *That* grace is but as a tender shrub which sends its

roots no deeper than the brain, and has never taken hold on the heartstrings of affection ;—and before the withering blasts of temptation, this plant, like that which once gave shelter to the prophet outside of ancient Nineveh, as it rose in a night, so it may also perish in a night. The cankerworm of the world is always gnawing at its root, and the dews of the Spirit are absent (because unsought) to refresh its branches. Gain THE HEART, and the HEAD will be an easy conquest. The mainspring right, all the machine moves in accordance therewith. Having got the rudder, you can move the man through the reefs and rocks of the ocean of life. Gain only the *head*, and you have but gained the sails of the vessel. The governor at the helm may turn you in whatever way he listeth.

Let the Sabbath school teacher never for one moment forget, that his work is a HEART work, and the HEART his aim and his object. He must therefore make it, on his part, a HEART work. Keep steadily in view the important distinction between *knowledge*, however accurate and extensive, and *true wisdom*, however humble it may appear, and to the world all unknown, and by the world often despised. It is still of the truth, though it be but now as the small seed which may become, in due time, the exceeding great tree. It is of the leaven of the Word which, however small, is still capable of leavening the whole mass of humanity. Only get the Gospel leaven into a man's heart, and it will, in God's time, leaven the whole man. The Sabbath scholar must therefore be ever taught to

“keep his HEART with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life”—“to incline his ear unto wisdom, and apply his HEART to understanding”—so that “wisdom may enter his HEART, and knowledge be pleasant unto his soul.” He must be urged to “forget not God’s law, but that with his HEART he keep His commandments”—to “trust in the Lord with all his HEART, and to lean not unto his *own understanding*.” “Mercy and truth are not only to be bound about his neck, but written upon the table of his HEART.” But hear now a greater than Solomon on the subject; for the Great Teacher must be at once the *pattern* and the *subject* of Sabbath school teaching. He who knew the *heart* of man, and spoke as never man spake, declared, that “out of the abundance of the HEART the mouth speaketh. A good man, out of the good treasure of the HEART bringeth forth good things; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.” And again: “From within, out of the HEART of man, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. *All* these evil things come from *within*, and defile the man.” One of the beatitudes is: “Blessed are the pure in HEART, for they shall see God.” Text upon text might be thus marshalled to prove the importance of the tuition of the *heart*. But “let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.”

It is not the improvement of attention, memory, or judgment, that is the chief aim of Sabbath school teaching. The *will*, the *renewed will*, is the grand object. We have seen pupils of Sabbath schools who could repeat the 119th Psalm, Christ's Sermon on the Mount, and numerous psalms and hymns, without faltering; and yet, of all this, perhaps it might have been written: "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." We have seen the quick-eyed, quick-eared scholar turn up text after text of reference to Scripture facts or Scripture doctrines; and yet this may have been all but foliage, and no cluster of Christian fruit may have sprung from it, ripening into life eternal.

Our fathers recognized the truth better than we do. We speak of committing Bible lessons *to memory*; they more appropriately talked of their children "*getting them by heart*." There was once a blind man who every day walked stately round the castle walks of Stirling, with his door-key in his hand, polished by the friction of many years; and as a mental curiosity, he would, to a passenger, recite any portion of Scripture fixed on at random, without the error of one word; and yet, alas! the blessed Word had no place in his HEART, which remained hard as the rock on which he daily trod; and it is said that his evenings were spent in debauchery, and in blaspheming the name of that God whose words were stereotyped on the tablets of his brain, without imparting the faintest traces on those of his heart. We would rather hear one child, who, under the influence of divine teaching

in the Sabbath school, could, with the HEART, and from the HEART, breathe forth the prayer: "Lord, have mercy on me a sinner," than hear a thousand who could only, parrot-like, mumble with the mouth, verse upon verse, and chapter on chapter, as Romanists idly tell their beads, or pilgrims measure the flinty road to some shrine of fabled saint.

The theme of Sabbath school teaching is "*Christ and Him crucified.*" Everything beside is good only when it leads to the elucidation of this great truth of salvation. As lines from the circumference of a circle to the centre, all should meet there—never diverging nor crossing, but coming nearer each other as they draw nigh this common centre. Because the HEART is sinful and impure, and the blood of the Lamb alone can cleanse it from all impurity, the Sabbath school teacher has laboured in vain—he has missed his aim—if he has not, from Sabbath to Sabbath, without one Sabbath omitted, faithfully, earnestly, and prayerfully exhibited the Cross of Christ to all and every one of his interesting charge. The vital truths of the Gospel are at once simple, and yet profound. They form a stream through which the little child may wade with ease, and yet are the floods whose depths no line of finite mind can fathom. MAN THE SINNER, MESSIAH THE SAVIOUR:—these are the two cardinal truths of all religious teaching. Mix them as you may with the wisdom of man, yet analyze them by the test of Scripture, and to these two simple elements is the truth once more resolved in lovely harmony. "Believe on the Lord

Jesus Christ and thou *shalt* be saved," should be the text of every Sabbath evening's lesson. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" should be the only object exhibited to the spiritual vision of the Sabbath school scholar. "Repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ," is the grand practical lesson of the Sabbath school, as it was of the school of the apostles. Let the whole instruction be saturated with the blood of the Cross, and be at once *personal* and *practical*.

It is not sufficient to impress the mind of a child with mere abstractions and generalities of truth. There is no period of life when truth in the concrete is more delightful, and in the abstract more repugnant. Tell the child, if he waits he will get an orchard, and he will feel uninterested; but proffer him an apple, and he will clutch the unit, and sell the hope of thousands. Content yourself, therefore, not with telling him that MAN is a sinner, but "that he is *the* man who is the sinner." Shew that he or she is a sinner by nature and by practice. Not only must Christ be exhibited as *a* Prophet, *a* Priest, and *a* King; but as *the* very Prophet who delights to teach *him*, and *the* one Priest who died for *his* sins, and *the* only spiritual King who rules over *him*. The child must, in the arms of faith, be carried to the very feet of Jesus, that, like the twin disciple, he may there, under the influence of divine teaching, be made to exclaim, with bursting heart and unloosed tongue, "My Lord and my God!"

When the teacher has spent hours with many pupils,

and told them all Scripture history as mere historical facts, but has omitted the great spiritual truth—the essential fact of redeeming love—the key to the whole Christian scheme—the fount of all religious truth—the basis of all pure ethics—he has been overcareful of many things, but he has omitted “the one thing needful.” But let him tell them this one great fact—Heaven’s own great fact—the charter of man’s salvation—and that from *the heart*, with *the heart*, and to *the heart*; and then, indeed, however limited may be his instruction in other branches of theological science, he has nevertheless gained the one great object of Sabbath school teaching,—the turning of sinners to God. He has sown the good seed beside all waters. He has cast the bread of life upon the surface of the tide; and in due season there will be an abundant return, though he may not live to reap and rejoice in the harvesting of the sheaves.

PART IV.

THE TEACHING—METHOD—SCRIPTURAL.

"Search the Scriptures; for in them are the words of eternal life."—
JOHN V. 39.

"Without the Bible, Britain's life-blood chills
And curdles;
'Reft of her Bible, not a drop remains
Of holy life-blood in the nation's heart."

MONTGOMERY.

Let the teaching of the Sabbath school be Scriptural. The Sabbath school is a *Scripture* school. The Bible is its only text-book—its only manual. Whatever other books are used, let them be subordinate—auxiliary—mere helps and indices to the Scriptures—never superseding or supplanting the Bible, so as to render the sacred oracles secondary or supplementary to any other book whatever. We are not advocates for the Bible being a mere class-book, to teach to spell and read, when solemn words may be mangled and tortured, and harsh remembrances of hard tasks, and harder pains, may continue throughout life in unfortunate association with the sacred page. But in every secular, but still more in every Sabbath, school, we do recommend a well-selected portion of Scripture to be statedly read, slowly and solemnly, by the presiding teacher,—whilst every scholar who can, should follow the reading devoutly, with his open Bible in hand. This exercise at the opening of the school, as a portion of religious service, would do much to solemnize and adapt the minds both of

teachers and taught to the duties of the evening. The children would thus be brought to look on the Bible not as a mere school-book, but to reverence it as the *Book of God*; and they might be thus brought to read for themselves with the understanding and the heart, evidenced by the modulations of the living voice, and not with that monotonous tone and sing-song cadence, indicating a mere act of tongue, which often renders its reading by the commonality disagreeable to the ear of the fastidious in taste, and painful to the serious-minded Christian.

In the ordinary school—much more so in the Sabbath school—there ought always to be a Bible class of adults, composed of those who can read well, and who can read, too, with understanding, and no longer as a task. If the portion read as part of the initiatory service be also made the subject of that evening's exercise, then reading verse by verse, and giving and receiving explanations, not merely on verse and verse, (which is altogether the artificial, and often unnatural division of uninspired man,) but rather sentence by sentence, and word by word, there are few young people but whose attentions will be fixed, and affections warmed, with the simple beauty of Scripture language and truth.

We may have more to say hereafter as to adult and Bible classes, as suited for an important period in youth, precisely when the Sabbath school system lacks its power, and fails in its energies, just where the ebb-tide of youth meets with the flood-tide

of manhood. Meantime, we may, in passing, urge that the Bible in every Sabbath school be the only book of reference, appeal, and authority, and that it be always seen on the teacher's desk, as well as in his hand. Teachers may often, with profit, refer to Boston and Baxter—to Calvin and Chalmers—to Wesley and Watt; but only so far as these great and good men took the Bible as their guide, and referred to Christ,—to Him who spoke "*as never man spake,*" and to "*the law and to the testimony.*" When the teacher is content with giving mere *human authority* as his warrant, it is to be feared his pupils may be content with somewhat even less than that. But when he refers ever and anon to holy writ, and invites those who can, to turn up with him the references to the very text, the youthful mind becomes imbued with the conviction, that there is but one infallible Christian guide,—the BOOK OF GOD.

This is the peculiar beauty of God's Word. It is the mirror of God. God's image is seen reflected there throughout. An old divine asked : "What index of contents can I place over every page which might truly be borne out by the text underneath?" and he answered, that only one would fit every page, and that one is, "Christ and Him crucified." As though you sever a common mirror into minute particles, still each minor piece reflects an entire image, becoming, no doubt, smaller with every reduction of the surface, but still an entire image in itself,—so, too, the whole Bible reflects one whole God in the infinitude of omni-

potence, and one whole Mediator Christ, between God and man, in the infinitude of divine love and mercy. Every Bible sentence, however small, has the same image; and examine it as you may in the light of Christian truth, still the same lovely image of a whole and perfect Christ is represented in every atom of divine writ. The sacred text as a whole forms the solid granite rock of truth; and that rock is Christ. Reduce it into the smallest divisions, still, as particles of the same substance, as little stones cut out of the mountain not by man's hands, placed side by side, they become the well-constructed pathway to heaven; for, says Christ, "I am the *way*; no man cometh to the Father but by me."

We do not object, as we have already said, to any auxiliaries, provided they do not supplant or supersede the use or authority of holy Scripture. But we do object to all manuals which do not throughout take God's unerring Word as their sole guide. No Primer for Sabbath school instruction is equal, in this Scriptural sanction, to the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly. It is a book very dear to every Scotchman. It is the book, next to the Bible, which long kept alive in our land Scripture truth and Scripture morality. With the unholy cessation of its daily use in the schools and families in Scotland, came in a flood of sin and immorality, which prisons—local and general—penal settlements abroad, and penal servitude at home, have not been able, and never will be able, to check or roll back. These, and all human

appliances, can only prune the wild moral vine. Religion alone can engraft on the true and living vine the core of the wild stock of fallen humanity.

With the risk of being thought uncharitable, we must say, that no catechism we have yet seen is at all equal, in every respect, to that of our *National* Catechism ; for it is indeed peculiarly national. In Catechisms of other churches there is more about the economy of the visible Church than the economy of divine grace. In our National Catechisms, there is not a word of the framework of a Christian Church, or the mode of ecclesiastical government ; so it is that these manuals of divine truth, as a common platform of our common Christianity, are received by bodies of Christians entertaining very different and opposing views on ecclesiastical matters, but who are as one in the essentials of faith and Scripture doctrine. In the existing contest for nationality, this our national religious standard is one of its brightest gems to be preserved ; and its benefits will outlast the nation itself. There was a time when it was thought a disgrace to a Scotchman to be unable to answer each question throughout his catechism ; and there is proof yet on its first page, that it was in constant use as well the humble Primer to letters and figures as to Christianity. The secular school was then the handmaid of the Christian Church, and not, as now, desirous to stand afar off from the Cross. We recommend, that the pupils should not unfrequently be told of the great antiquity and authority of the little book put into their hands, and of the extraordinary

history of its origin and preservation. Little children purchasing the freshly printed book from a bookseller, for one penny, know not but that it is the production of yesterday. Very likely they give its authorship to their minister or teacher, and wonder (while they admire in ignorance) where they got so many long words, and strung them into what, at first sight, appears to them so many hard and difficult sentences. Tell them it is now running in age its third century. Tell them in very plain language of the wonderful Assembly which met to concord the belief of two nations which had just become one for time, and sought thus to be made so for eternity. Tell them of the eminent servants of God who composed the Assembly—of their long seditious—above all, of their fervent prayers for direction at the throne of grace. Tell them the few anecdotes which have floated down the stream of time,—extremely few,—just as if to shew the work was God's, and so depending not on human tradition. Tell them such a story as the sudden arrest of thought and utterance on the momentous question being first propounded, *What is God?*—which, under the influence of divine guidance, has produced a response which, for truthful and simple Scriptural and logical definition, baffles all human comparison. Tell them, too, how this little book alongside the Bible, just as its index, has been an essential piece of Christian furniture, for centuries, in every cottage of their fatherland,—how their sires were taught from childhood, on the mother's knee, to lisp its every answer; and that when the

minister came his stated rounds, each child was ready to win his favour and obtain his smile, by the accurate answer at any place he turned up in the little book, and if asked, proud to give him the proofs beside. Tell them how their grandfathers and grandmothers followed this plan of family education on every Sabbath night at the fireside. Tell them how it has already been translated into at least ten different languages for the use of as many Christian tribes. Tell them all this, and such as this, and you will find that the children will love their catechism, and delight to learn its answers, and turn their open countenances with delight on you, whilst you are explaining its somewhat hard words, and shewing its application to the practical life even of a little child. The writer has tried this with success, and never failed in interesting children with the little book, when they knew its history and object.

It is a strange fact in the philosophy of mind, that children are all antiquaries, and that their love of antiquity somewhat diminishes with the increase of their own age. What child has not felt, in reading the Old Testament, a delightful feeling when reading the words: "*And it standeth until this day*"—a yearning to go immediately and see this ancient pillar, or that other object of Scripture history? It is difficult, and sometimes painful, to disabuse the youthful mind by telling them that the words "*this day*" are applicable to the time of *writing*, and not of *reading* the sacred record. When youth passes into manhood,

the stern realities and wants of the *present* engross the mind to the exclusion of both past and future. The *now* is everything. The *has been* and the *shall be* have small place in the thoughts. It is well sometimes to lead the youthful mind up the stream of time. It leads them to think of the world and mankind as something existing beyond the verge of their own little circle of place and time; and knowing that there has been an interesting and instructive *past*, the mind rebounds into the regions of the *future*, which are dark to all but those who seek to explore them with the light of Scripture truth.

In making the Scriptures the sole standard of Sabbath school teaching, we would urge the propriety of a judicious selection of passages, either for reading or committing to memory. It is obvious that the narrative portions of the Bible should be made use of in preference to its more didactic and doctrinal portions. Our Saviour is an example in this respect, who spoke to the common people in parables,—the beauty and truthfulness of which recommended themselves to the multitudes. We do not exclude the doctrinal in this preference, for there is no Bible student but knows that the whole Gospel history is replete with Gospel lessons. The story is the simple acorn of truth, which, planted in the mind, germinates the lofty oak. We have been more than once vexed to find able and pious teachers, with the best intentions, but altogether forgetful of the different standard of mind in the juvenile and the adult, expounding to a

restless, or where not restless, a sleepy class, the Epistle to the Romans, and the profundities of election and divine grace, with all Scriptural truth, but with the absence of all Scriptural adaptation. As well might the teacher discourse of the integral calculus to the boy who came to him to learn simple addition.

We recollect of hearing of a school, which whenever the committee of the presbytery visited, they found that the scholars read to them no part of the Bible save the Book of Revelation. At length, one of their number expostulated, and kindly suggested to the teacher, that some portions of narrative should occasionally be substituted for the heavenly visions of the exile of Patmos. "*Most true,*" said the teacher, "*but children must be diverted.*" A Celt himself, and an admirer of the Ossianic writings, he had imagined that stories of sun, moon, and stars, angelic hosts, dragons, and beasts, with visions of heaven and hell, were equally delightful to the mind of his lowland and civic pupils, as to his own mountain-mist-bred brain.

No portion of Scripture should be read and explained, and then passed by, without a satisfactory ascertainment that the explanation has been fully understood and appreciated by every pupil. Again and again should the question be put to this one, and to that one, and to every one. First let it be done *indirectly*, that the youthful mind may have the bound of the delight of *discovery*, and then gradually descending, until made so plain and direct, that infant

lips may solve the answer. If the truth is thus *discovered by the mind*, rather than *discovered to the mind*, then will it have taken a grasp thereof, which it may never lose. Every reading of Scripture must result in some Gospel truth—some practical lesson elucidated and enforced. This is the *Q. E. D.* of all Scripture demonstration. If there be one suitable verse in the reading itself, or in some other portion of holy writ, let the scholars commit it to memory,—“by heart,” was the fitter phrase of our grandfathers,—let that text contain the compressed substance of the lesson taught. If the text be in the portion read, or in the context, it is all the better. But let it be a *simple* text, of easy comprehension, and the shorter the better. The object is not to load the memory with words, even though they be “*the words of truth* ;” but to plant the very seeds of truth in the heart.

As we deem the Bible to be the only standard of teaching, we would recommend that the Psalms be the chief vehicle of praise. As that manual of devotion is the work of *God's* own Spirit, it must be best fitted for spiritual worship. Our version is so very close to the original that it cannot fail to be Scriptural. Here, again, there is room for judicious selection. The 23d and the 100th Psalms never fail to enlist youthful sympathy ; and this will be seen by the very pathos of their singing these divine words, making melody in the heart. The 119th Psalm, in like manner, affords a rich mine wherefrom to dig the finest pearls of praise. We do not object to the paraphrases, or certain selec-

tions of hymns, though there be some far from being either Scriptural in diction, or elegant in taste, some lacking much of dignity, and offending the sober and serious-minded Christian by a prurient familiarity with the Almighty, before whom angelic hosts veil their faces. Some collections, however, recommend themselves for Scriptural simplicity, and are well suited for infant hearts. We have found the 2d, 15th, 58th, 60th, 64th, and 66th of the Assembly paraphrases, especial favourites with the young. It is easy to perceive, at a glance, whether the childrens' hearts are in harmony with their voices; and where these are discordant in any attempt at praise, let the same portion never be again selected.

Once more, we urge on all Sabbath school teachers to know that their vocation is to teach *Christianity*—that *Christianity* can only be taught by teaching *Christ*—and that Christ can only be taught by and through His own Word; for “In the volume of the *Book* it is written of *Him* ;” and the song of angelic hosts is ever: “Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof.”

PART V.

THE TEACHING—THE METHOD—SIMPLICITY.

“ Oh ! how unlike the complex works of man
Heaven's easy, artless, unencumbered plan ! ”

ALL the works of GOD are marked with *simplicity*. All that man attempts is characterized by *complexity*. The improvement of any machine consists in divesting it of some parts found not essential to its operation ; and the more simple it becomes, just the more is it made efficient, and nearer in pattern to the works of the Almighty. There are a noise and a bustle in man's work which attend its every stage. Each human edifice is reared amidst the Babel-confusion of the sound of many tongues and tools, and amidst much toil and sweat of labour. God's work is like to the building of the first temple, where “there was neither hammer nor axe, nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building.” Like the gentle vegetation of spring, every day shews a progress without the faintest sound of the foot-falls of its onward march. Like the dew on the tender herb, which fertilizes the earth, and yet is unheard and unseen, save in its happy consequences and products,—so with the *Word*, as with the *works* of God. All of revealed truth is simple. There is, no doubt, depths of infinitude ; but even of these, their announcement is made

in simple language. If certain truths be difficult of *comprehension*, there is none but what is of easy *apprehension*. We can *lay hold* of all, though some we cannot entirely grasp and make our own, just because the *finite* cannot *contain* or comprehend the *infinite*. The well of truth may be deep, but then the water is transparent to the bottom, though our limited vision cannot fathom that depth. The Scripture is distinguished for the beauty of its simplicity, and in no part more so than in the holy teaching of the divine Saviour. The common people ever heard Him gladly, for they understood Him, as He spoke not as the scribes and pharisees, in the language of the schools, or with parade of human learning. The nearer, therefore, that Sabbath school teaching approaches the standard of Holy Scripture, and the model of its divine Author, the more likely is it to be acceptable and successful.

There is a difficult point to obtain and maintain, and that is, the precise gauge of the youthful mind. This requires much acquaintance,—first, with ourselves; next, with our subject; and, lastly, with our scholars. This can only be obtained by prayerful study and close application. To accomplish this, there is much in having small, but well-associated classes. In attaining this, age is not the only or the proper criterion of selection and association. It is rather an assimilation and identity in mental and moral attainment and progress, with just such a variety as will give interest to a subject, by its being

looked at in different aspects, as it presents itself to different minds. In the same way, the class ought not to be so large as to prevent the teacher from intimately knowing, as far as possible, the mechanism of every mind, and the uppermost and innermost feeling of every heart; nor so limited as to render the teaching too personal, and the subject too much individualized. Eight to twelve scholars make a very manageable class. If there be a greatly mixed class, what may be simple to one may be profound to another; and thus the teacher, in balancing between the two, runs the risk of being unedifying to one section, and unprofitable to both.

There is a risk, on the one hand, of sacrificing simplicity to profundity, and, on the other hand, in the desire to become very simple, of descending to the level of vulgarity or puerility. To shoot our instructions over the heads of our charge, never touches either head or heart. To level too low may startle some, but cannot secure a lodgment in their spiritual constitutions. There are two modes of dealing with any subject to be illustrated: the one is, the synthetic—the other, the analytic. The subject may be presented in its simple concrete form, and the mind of the pupil led, step by step, to the higher truths or principles which may be evolved from the plain facts. The scholars, on the other hand, may have their attention first directed to truth in the abstract, and then led, step by step, to its details and applications to practice in everyday life. No general rule

can be adopted for the application of either mode. So, with one scholar, the former mode, with another, the latter may be the best. To different minds and associations of minds, the opposite modes may, each in its turn, be best fitted to ensure attention and carry conviction. There are few Bible truths but admit of both modes of illustration ; and the more successful procedure will be to combine the two in harmony.

Sir Walter Scott commenced his *Tales of a Grandfather* in a style so infantine, that his grandson spurned them as beneath his mental standard ; and the talented instructor had therefore to ascend the scale, and assume a higher and more matured tone of instruction, before he made it palatable to the object of his solicitude. William Cobbett, on the other hand, wrote his *English Grammar* in letters to his sons. He caused them to write them over ; and whenever there were any passages they did not fully understand, they, as ordered, submitted these to him. He gave them no oral explanation whatever, nor spoke a word, but he scored and rewrote the whole passage, and repeated this, once and again, until he was fully satisfied his children, with their own minds, comprehended his meaning from the book, without the aid of any oral exposition.

It is well, in general, rather to aim a little *above* the level of the capacities of those with whom we have to do. It is a *feeling*, if not a *failing* in men, to be reckoned wiser than they are ; and they are not willing to be undeceived. It is no idle tale

of the old wife who followed after a very learned preacher, but who was shocked at the presumptuous question put to her whether she understood his preaching. There is still a desire to mount the tree of knowledge. It will be well to help little people, like Zaccheus, to mount by the wayside the tree of knowledge, if they thereby but get a glance of their blessed Saviour as He passes, and a Gospel invitation to abide with Him, and He with them. If the teacher starts very low, the youthful mind feels somewhat pained, and, as if insulted, becomes unwilling to be led farther by one who had so much undervalued the mental powers of his auditory. If he starts too high, and speaks in the lofty language and strain of transcendentalism, his class may wonder, but will seldom feel interested,—there will be a difficulty in descending, and there may exist an awkward contrast between the ascent and descent, which may permanently injure him in the estimation of those who ought always to respect him. The ascent of the aeronaut is safer by far than his descent. We have, more than once, heard an illustration taken from the prophet of Israel, in his mode of restoring the son of the Shunamite: "And he went up and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands, and he stretched himself upon the child, and the *flesh* of the child waxed warm." This may form a beautiful enough analogy for bringing the adult mind to the level of that of the juvenile. But the *miraculous* is not always a just rule for the

ordinary administration of *ordinary* affairs. Taken *literally*, there may be risk, on the one hand, of crippling and distorting the instructing mind ; and, on the other, of smothering or too much overlaying the mind to be instructed. It is the *heart*, and not the *flesh* of the young which the Sabbath school teacher desires to be "*waxed warm*."

The safer course is, to discover the powers of our own minds, the capacity of those with whom we have to deal, and the fitness of each subject to be dealt with, by a standard somewhat above or below the capacity of the instructed. On the one hand, let every teacher shun the danger of being "*wise above what is written*," or of starting common objections to received and self-obvious truths of revelation. An *objection* may be level to the natural heart and affections, whilst its *answer* may require too much of mental and spiritual abstraction to be readily comprehended, or is too much in hostility to the perverse will and alienated affections, to be easily received. No subject should be introduced but what is capable of being made fully understood to the average mind of the whole class ; and no subject should be taken up and left before there has been somewhat of evidence that its doctrine is so far understood by the heads, and its truth felt by the *hearts* of the taught. This shews the necessity of the teacher being well prepared for his duty, and adopting and strictly following a regular system.

Each night's exercises should be consecutive with that which goes before, and preparatory for that which

is next to come after. The Shorter Catechism, as a text-book, affords singular adaptation for this regular series of instruction. Each night's lesson should be as setting another stepping-stone across the stream of truth—not too close to its neighbour, so as to give the passenger a painful feeling of making no progress; neither too far apart, so as to render each movement painful, under a feeling of danger, and of losing a safe footing; neither ought it to be in a jolting style, now rapid and then slow—now all mystery, and next all simplicity—sometimes, above the ken of human capacity, on ground where angels fear to tread, and anon so *childish* (not *childlike*, for that is a different word, and a very different matter) as to excite a smile or produce scorn for the seeming insult. We have often heard the truthful saying: “*Oh! we kent all that before!*” whilst, in fact, it was only true as to the *manner* of the instructions, the *matter* being such as neither teacher nor taught could fully measure or weigh.

The well-instructed and experienced teacher will soon learn, from the langour and the lack-lustre eye of his class, whether his scholars are mentally following him, and keeping alongside with his advance—neither lagging behind, nor anxious to press on before him; and looking at this as a moral thermometer, he must adjust the temperature of his teaching accordingly. It is well that the scholars should be encouraged to *think for themselves*, and to inquire for food for thought. The teacher cannot think and feel for the pupil, but he may do much to help the progress

of thought and feeling in the pupil's breast. He may believe that he has made a subject plain to the capacity of his little circle, and yet, the next Sabbath, he may sorrowfully find, that what he thought was fully *understood* by his class, is as little known by them as ever, or, what is worse, was wholly *misunderstood*. But let the mind of the pupil perform its own work—let it rather have the truth *mastered by the mind*, than the *mind mastered by the truth*. Let the young one have the germ of truth planted in his mind, and let him be excited to follow out its development into all its roots, stem, branches, flowers, and fruits. Let the little, but precious stone, be given him, and let him be made to analyze its different parts, to separate them, and to re-unite them again. This done, the truths thus acquired will never lose their hold on the mind by which they were thus first worked out, and next laid up in the storehouse of memory. In fact, they become part and parcel of the mental man. We have seen where an explanation was given, in answer to an anxious inquiry, that the truth so received was never lost to the inquirer. But when the instructor went one step beyond, and added to the answer by an additional advance in knowledge, the whole of the additional matter was forgot, because unsought and uncared for. The mind was prepared to receive the first portion, and did receive that. The mind was unprepared for the second portion, and rejected it. The mental appetite was satisfied, and the loaded trencher, however tempting it may be, was sent

away untouched. The mind, by its own force, had made a step firmly up the ladder of truth ; but it was unwillingly carried a step higher, and the faltering foot was placed mechanically, or forced on the higher step, which it could not long retain. The little one brings its tiny pitcher to the clear well of truth. It gladly receives and carries away the portion of pure liquid which its pitcher can contain. All that is poured in beyond the capacity of the vessel, runs over in waste, and may not a little perturb the purity, or diminish the quantity of what was within, or make the water-bearer less careful of his little store where there appears such show of abundance and waste beyond.

Let the teacher, therefore, assimilate himself to what God desires and invites His followers—namely, *to work with Him*. Let him be a *fellow-worker* with his pupils, and they with him. Each Sabbath school should be a Gospel hive—only one sovereign, but no drones—all “*little busy bees*,” improving the hour—labouring to gather divine truth from every sacred source, and to add to the rich Gospel stores, more sweet and precious far than honey and the honey-comb. Let this be the distinction between the teaching of the *Sabbath* and the week-day school. *Instruction* is the chief object of the latter—to sow the seeds of knowledge, or to help truth to flow in. *Education* is the main object of the Sabbath school—to lead on—to draw forth—to impart genial warmth to the seeds of truth, small as they may be, as those of the

mustard tree—to cherish the feeble plant in the name, and with the gracious help of Him who will not “*quench the smoking flax*”—and thus to raise the gentle but bright flame of personal and practical piety in each bosom.

The Sabbath-school teacher must, by his earnest simplicity, become as one of his class. He ought never, by the scholars, to be reckoned *the master*, but *the friend*—the friend of sinners—himself a sinner. It must be made to appear that his interests, his objects, his hopes, his faith, are all identical with theirs. That he is not teaching for hire, for honour, or for pleasure; but that, himself feeling the great truths of religion, and its delights, which pass understanding, he feels that his delights are increased by making others sharers in the same. The wish in the heart of the teacher should be *earnest* and *prayerful*, that the like desires be awakened in the hearts of his pupils. They must be made to perceive that he is a person wholly and always in earnest; and that his labours are, in season and out of season, to win their souls to Christ—that it is not *himself*, but *Christ*, that he seeks to glorify—that it is not his own wisdom, but the wisdom of the most high God, that he is declaring—that it is not *time*, but *eternity*, that is his constant theme—that there is nothing but the importance of the subject to them, as well as to himself, which could induce him, night after night, thus to come amongst them, and speak to them, “*each in their own tongues the wonderful works of God.*”

There is no charm (if the term may be excused) so efficacious in achieving this great work, next to the influence of the Holy Spirit himself, the great Teacher, than singleness of purpose, devotedness to duty, zeal, and earnestness in the work, and the utmost simplicity in the language. The pure Saxon should be preferred to all learned phrases, however approved and elegant. It is much fitter to speak of the "*ten commandments*" than of "*the decalogue*,"—to tell of "*things before or after the flood*," than to talk of "*antediluvian and postdiluvian events*." The more scriptural the language the better. But every scriptural term ought to be simply and repeatedly explained, until completely mastered. It is inconceivable the ignorance which exists, even in adults, as to the use of Bible terms. There is a natural proneness to attach *modern* meanings to Gospel terms, which often makes sad havoc with Gospel lessons. We have known the Jewish publican confounded with the modern tavern-keeper. There is small difficulty in indoctrinating the young with the true meaning of Scripture terms, and their difference from the same words in modern times. All the proper names ought thus often to be explained with great simplicity, and, as frequently as they occur, the class ought to be asked what the words mean. We have seen an interest and fondness for Bible reading thus easily introduced, which, from ignorance of the hard words of Judaical origin, did not before exist, and therefore, to some extent, the meaning of many passages was misunderstood or misapplied.

Thus will the Sabbath school teacher "shew himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." As "the servant of the Lord, he must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves."

PART VI.

THE TEACHING—THE MODE—SOLEMNITY.

"The place whereon thou standest is holy ground"—Exodus iii 5.

"Young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded"—TITUS ii. 6.

THE patriarch's head was pillowed on stone, but he saw, in vision, the only mode by which man can ascend to heaven; and "he awaked out of his sleep and said, Surely the Lord is in this place *and I knew it not!*" The favoured disciples saw their divine Master apparelled with the robes of heavenly glory; and one of their number—the most forward in the band, as his pretended successors have ever been, and still are the most arrogant—said: "Master, it is good for us to be here, and let us make three tabernacles—for *he wist not what to say.*" We are not advocates for *holy places*, such as those for the possession of which hecatombs of mankind have been sacrilegiously slain. It is not the *place* which is holy, or engenders holiness, but its living inhabitants, through the influences of the Holy Spirit. The *holy war* is not *external*, for possession of certain portions of this earth, but is *internal*, for the conquest of the heart of man. Heaven itself we conceive of much more as a *state* than a *place*. It is a state of perfect holiness, and, therefore, of perfect

happiness. Wherever the Godhead dwells, there heaven must be. Wherever heaven is, there must exist holiness; and without this qualification none can enter its precincts, or dwell where God doth dwell. Those who seek heaven and heavenly joys on earth, because of *locality*, and not of *quality*, like Peter, "*wist not what they say*;" and those who feel that God may be present wherever He is in sincerity sought, whether in cathedral or in cottage, Jacob-like, they may have the immediate presence of God, and yet, perhaps, *know it not*.

Solemnity is the appropriate garb of divine worship and teaching, and its disregard is discordant to its every rule and feeling. The Sabbath school is a chamber or court in the Sabbath church. God is in both the only object of worship—godliness the only theme—Christ and His cross the only subject. Therefore, *solemnity* should be the pervading principle of action—the very spiritual atmosphere in which the soul breathes. The less the Sabbath school is assimilated to that of the week-day or secular school, and the more it approximates to the Church, in its services, its lessons, and its whole conduct and economy, the more likely is it to subserve its end—the *glory of God in the highest, in the godly upbringing of the young, that He may ever have a seed on earth to serve Him*.

This is a most important subject, and too often disregarded. The young are very apt to carry the notions and pursuits of the six days' school into that of the seventh day, and to expect much of the same services and instructions, as well as the same liberties. They

may find that more of the Bible is read in the Sabbath school than in that of the week-day,—alas! shall it be ever said that the Bible is only to be statedly read in the former, and never in the latter? But the young still are apt to consider it in the view of the ordinary school. “The school is in,” and “the school is out;” “there is no schooling to-night;” “he has been playing the truant from the Sabbath school;” and, “the *master* was absent last night,”—are sayings that have been often said, and had (especially the last) been better unsaid. We repeat what we said before, that the Sabbath school teacher ought always to act and teach so as to impress his youthful charge with the fixed impression, that the week-day school is intended *chiefly* (though certainly not *entirely*) for earth—that of the Sabbath, for heaven. The former for time, the latter for eternity. The former, the chief end of man now and here—the latter the chief end of man here and hereafter: “to glorify God, and to enjoy Him FOR EVER.”

We boldly challenge contradiction, whether we speak the truth, when we say that, in the assembling and dismissal of some Sabbath schools, there is often as much, if not more, noise and disorder than in the entry and exit of the week-day school—that neighbourhoods have complained, and that the police have even been invoked for protection—that in some schools there is often a boisterous and rude entry, and contest for places; and, at the dismissal, a race for the door, painful to those who desire to *wait for the Lord*.

We have often seen how a solemn admonition has

been of great avail, in at least abating, if not in removing this nuisance. But mere fitful or occasional appliances will not do. Constant and persevering superintendence will alone succeed. Some of the teachers may be usefully employed outside the school-room, both at the assembling and dismissal; and by such perseverance they will, in the end, be rewarded with complete success. If the young have been kept some half-an-hour in boisterous mirth outside, it is next to miraculous if any *solemn* impression within doors be made on their minds by an hour's admonition, however earnest and pertinent. So, too, however awakened and startled the conscience may be by the exercises of the evening, if the breaking up of the school be to recommence a scene of riot and noise, there is much fear that good impressions will be wrecked amidst those more congenial to the depraved mind. We repeat it, that a well-sustained organization, both in the foreign, as well as the home service—the outfield, as well as the homestead—is necessary; and, if persevered in, (as we have seen,) and the children made to discover that the teachers are thoroughly in earnest, and firmly resolved that a Sabbath school is to be a school on the Sabbath solely for solemn religious instruction and divine worship, they will, in the end, give the same solemnity in the school that they give in the church, and, it may be, even more.

What we complain of is, that this and many similar evils are admitted and mourned over without a bold and prudent attempt at correction, or where such is

essayed, it is more as emollients than curatives. The remedy is applied by fits and starts. A few nights a strict surveillance is successful, and then, as no longer necessary, it is withdrawn; and with the withdrawal, the evil springs into renewed vigour. Nothing can prevent the recurrence of natural evil but *perseverance* in all counteracting influences. The practical advice is, let a teacher, in rotation, be present a given time—say half-an-hour—before the time of assembling; let the school-room be open; and let him invite all immediately to come in, and prevent any remaining without. He can see the classes properly arranged. They can revise, or even prepare their lessons, as is often found to be needed. But his duty should be to preserve entire quiet within and without. So, too, at the dismissal, let the classes be dismissed slowly and separately, and without unseemly crushing, as if each were about to run a race to be first away from the influence of Sabbath instruction. Some of the teachers should be outside, to prevent the children congregating together, and to see that each child speedily wends his way homeward. We feel satisfied, that much of “evil communications corrupting good manners,” has been held outside, before the assembling, and after the dismissal of Sabbath schools. This will not be checked by an occasional admonition, however solemn. It will require constant superintendence. God, who knows the human heart best, has recommended “line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little,” for the accomplishment of Heaven’s great end.

Man reverses this injunction, and enjoins a line now and a precept then; here what is thought great, and there what is conceived to be greater; and then the work is vainly thought to be done. Thus he thinks himself wiser in his generation than Him whose name is *Wisdom*. Continual dropping wears the flinty rock; the torrent rushing over its surface leaves no trace behind.

We have said, the more the Sabbath school is assimilated to the Sabbath church, and the less to the week-day school, the better. We, therefore, decidedly oppose, what we know has sometimes been permitted, the assigning places, high or low, in the class, with unseemly contest for superiority, purchased at any cost; and we even greatly doubt the expediency of prizes, or premiums for merit, good attendance, or good conduct, just as much as corporal punishment would be admitted for demerit. All such artificial appliances are subversive of some of the first Christian principles taught in the Sabbath school. The vacation, or holidays, (as they are viciously called,) form another grievance to be guarded against. A difficulty at certain seasons there is, no doubt, especially in towns, in finding the same number of efficient teachers. But there will be found little, if any decrease in the number of those who are the proper objects of Sabbath teaching. Every effort, therefore, ought to be made to keep the classes together throughout the whole year. There is no vacation in the church, why ought there to be so in its school? There is no cessation of the

sacred Sabbath, ought there to be such in the school of the Sabbath? There may be some falling off in the number of scholars actually in attendance; but the example, in this respect, set by teachers, will be assuredly followed by the taught, for good or for evil. Wherever two or three are met in the name of Christ, He will certainly be with them, both to bless them, and to do them good. There is no recess in the care, and protection, and merciful dispensations of God, on the one hand, or, on the other hand, to the progress of sin and vice, and in the works of the ever-busy enemy of God and man, who is ever "going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it." There is no arrest in the progress of youth, or stay in the acquisition of knowledge, of one kind or other. Youth must be advancing in the knowledge of good or of evil. Brief is the period, at the very best, which is allowed for their godly training. The evil tendencies of the six ordinary days of the week are antagonistic to the beneficial culture of the Sabbath hour. But an interval of some weeks, it may be of months, at the season most tempting to wandering habits, is calculated to deface the beneficial tendencies of previous teaching. It is pernicious to teach the young that religion is a study for fixed times and certain seasons. They ought to be taught experimentally, that it pervades every day, and every hour of the day, and permeates every transaction of life, from the cradle to the grave.

Whilst thus pleading for *solemnity* and *gravity*, and

the absence of all *irreverence* and *levity* in the Sabbath school, and all that concerns it, we are equally opposed to sullen moroseness, or a stiff cold dullness. We believe that many young persons have been repulsed from the cultivation of religious sentiments and practices by their unseemly exemplification in some professors. They are thus led to associate all religious service with the gloom of night, and to take its insignia to be a death's head and cross-bones. An ireful, discontented, morose, and sulky temperament, is a positive disqualification for being a Sabbath school teacher, however high be the attainments, and extensive the information possessed. A happy sinner, or an unhappy Christian, are, generally speaking, solecisms of speech. An unbeliever may be mirthful, yea, he may be boisterous in his mirth ; but it is only as the crackling of thorns—there is no heat, substance, or permanency of principle in such idle display. There is a calm and cheerful solemnity of manner, that, like the still beauty of a Sabbath morning in some sweet rural vale, betokens the internal “peace of conscience and joy in believing” which true religion can alone impart, and which the world cannot give nor take away. The young must not be driven nor *drawn*, but *led* and *brought* to Christ. They must be wooed and won to the Cross ; not laid hold of and, like Simon of Cyrene, “*compelled* to bear the cross”—but invited after the manner of the disciples : “We have found the Messiah, which is Christ”—“come and see.” It is less the terror of the law, though in the voice of thunder, than the sweet

accents of the Gospel call, which prevail. Whirlwinds of passionate declamation may startle and force the little flock, for a moment, to crouch together in greatest terror, and draw their carnal cloaks more closely and tightly around them; but it is the small still voice of the Gospel which has charms for the infant ear,—it is the rays of the Sun of Righteousness which penetrate the dark corners of the youthful heart, and dispel the gloom of sin. When the scholars see in their teachers a uniform display of solemn, yet sweet and cheerful temper, never ruffled by passion, never fretted by contradiction, nor annoyed by difficulties, but calmly and softly pursuing the even tenor of its way—their youthful minds are impressed with the truth, that their teachers are thoroughly in *earnest*; and they first love the *message* for the *messenger's* sake, and thereafter love the *messenger* the greater, the more they know the important value of the *message*, and now love *Him* who sent it sealed with His blood.

It has been objected to our Presbyterian form of worship, that it is inimical to *solemnity*. We deny such a result to be *inherent* in the system. It is only accidental, and often the result of carelessness in its ministry. *Simplicity* is more akin to *solemnity* than *formality* can possibly be. A system of forms is apt to lead to the mere mechanism of mind, and duties may come to be carelessly performed as taskwork, and as matter of routine.

But we painfully acknowledge, that we are far behind in proper solemnity of worship, from neglecting

to enforce the duty, or animadverting on its violation. It has sometimes occurred to us, that some parties, by their own example, rather advise than otherwise the want of solemnity in public worship. The people in country parishes often assemble in the churchyard, first to discuss the affairs of the living amongst the mansions of the dead, and then, in a tumultuous mass move at a signal to crush into their pews. Listen, upon this, to our venerable *Directory of Public Worship*: "*Let all enter the assembly, not irreverently, but in a grave and seemly manner.*" The praises of God are often attempted to be sung without any training or effect at time, tune, or concord—the result of the want of any right Sabbath school tuition. The prayer is too often the period afforded for the general review of the day—the vacant or anxious gaze around, and the weekly enumeration and census of the whole congregation. Vacant places are marked in the pew, but left unnoticed in the heart. The fashion of garments is especially observed, but little the fashion of the inner man. The sermon is listened to with some greater reverence—for, with many, that seems the principal, if not the sole object of the assemblage; and the worship of the Most High God appears but auxiliary—the prologue and epilogue to the preaching. The service is concluded with the apostolic blessing, not one word of which, in many churches, is heard. The *Directory* enjoins: "*Let the minister dismiss the congregation with a solemn blessing.*" But it is too often the watchword for "*departure*" or "*dismiss.*" Hats are rubbed—noses

are loudly blown—Bibles are folded up in handkerchiefs, or pushed into pockets—apt emblem of hearts; unfit to receive the Word—shawls are adjusted and pinned—pew-doors are anxiously opened, and the feet of the fortunate few are projected—all ready for the race at the hearing of the happy *Amen*, as if a fall of the edifice was dreaded, or as if an alarm of fire at some unknown homestead had been suddenly announced. It would seem that the worshippers no longer wait on their God, but that their God must wait on them.

It is not to be greatly wondered at, that many people, not to say of refined taste, but of proper feeling, leave the Presbyterian Church for another,—the standards and doctrines of which are (or ought to be) identical; but in which there exists the semblance of greater solemnity. Extremes produce their opposites, and some enrol themselves members of that section of the Church which Sir Sidney Smith has so happily described as sustaining “*a system of positions and impositions.*” Now, we seriously inquire, What has been done or doing to stop this practice of irreverence, so inconsistent, and so detrimental to our Presbyterian form of worship, and thus yearly thinning our ranks? How seldom is the duty of reverence and solemnity inculcated from the pulpit, and congregations admonished of the evil effects of such conduct! We rejoice to know instances where such has been undertaken with success; and that there are Presbyterian congregations where solemnity equal to any cathedral service prevails, with this greater recommendation, that in the

former there is no rite or rubric to be obeyed, nor fixed consuetudinary system to be followed. The forms are expressively solemn, because the mind itself is earnestly solemnized. The solemnity is all the more marked, because without rule or art. It is but the natural result of simplicity in combination with grave earnestness in the sacred business of the day—the worship of God, and the listening to His message of grace.

If solemnity be early impressed on the youth of the Church through the instrumentality of the Sabbath school,—if they are there taught and habituated in sober serious thoughts on the momentous subjects of eternity,—if, in praise, they are there taught to sing with the heart and the understanding, and in harmony,—if, in prayer, the children are made to shut their eyes, or incline their heads on the desks, and urged to carry the same becoming habit into the church, a few years will not pass before a marked change and improvement will be found in all Presbyterian churches which have the appendage of a well-taught and well-regulated Sabbath school; and the rapidity and extent of this improvement, so much to be desired, will just evidence the success of the Sabbath school teaching, and its proper superintendence and management, and impression on the young.

PART VII.

BIBLE OR ADULT CLASSES.

"A man may as well take a view of things on earth in a dark night by the light of his own eye, as pretend to discover the things of heaven in the night of nature by the light of his own reason"—BISHOP HORNE.

IN one sense *every* class in a Sabbath school is, or ought to be, a *Bible class*, in so far as that blessed book is the *only text-book* from which all instruction is there given. But there ought to be a separate class where *peculiarly* the Bible is the subject of close and earnest study. *Previously* its precepts may have been more a matter commanding the *attention* of the children; *now* they are presented to enlist the *affections* of the young. Formerly they may have interested the *mind* of the scholar; *now* they are sought to find a place in his very *heart*. Like the man after God's own heart, the more advanced pupils are now to be invited and urged to "*hide God's Word in their heart, that they may not sin against God,*" just as the woman in the parable *hid* the little leaven in the lump which leavened the whole mass. As beautifully and truthfully said by Pascal: "God has designed that divine truth should pass from the *heart* into the *head*, and not from the *head* into the *heart*; and so it is necessary to *know* human things in order to *love* them; but it is necessary to *love* divine things in order to *know* them."

If there be a period in man's brief but eventful pilgrimage more than another at which perils surround him—when the passions are strong for evil or for good—when the mind is powerfully susceptible to virtuous or to vicious impressions and impulses,—that is the brief period which connects youth with manhood—that bridges the narrow gulf between the docile disciple and the man who is, or conceives himself to be, now his own master. Just as in summer, it is said there are a few days which determine the condition of the coming harvest. If the sun then shines bright and warm, the juices are matured and consolidated, and made ready for the autumn. But if cold and withering mildews descend, a few hours destroy the fair progress of months, and the lovely prospect of spring is at once and for ever blasted ; and the havoc is all the more apparent in proportion to the amount of herbage and verdure over which the ungenial winds have swept their deadly course. So, too, a few years, it may be months, nay, days, with many, have accomplished the fatal work when youthful instructions are uprooted ; whilst men were asleep, the ever-wakeful enemy of God and man has sowed tares, broadcast, where wheat had been often strewed. We have seen many a youthful mind, opening with the fair prospect of blossoms ripening into the perfect fruits of righteousness, nursed under the prayerful anxieties of godly parents, and enjoying, too, the advantage of a Christian ministry and an enlightened course of Sabbath school instruction, but, passing too soon under the

tempests of the world's temptations, become a barren and blasted branch of the social tree. With one, the seeds of early instruction had fallen by the wayside, and the wicked one, as the fowls, came and devoured them. With another, the seed had fallen on stony places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith, when the sun of tribulation and persecution arose, the plants were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. With others, the seed fell among thorns, which are the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches; and these choked the Word, and this portion became unfruitful. Whilst, according to the instructive parable, *three* classes, all of them taught and receiving the seed of the Word, yielded no fruits of righteousness, only *one* class received the Word and "*understood it;*" and thereby, with the blessing of the Lord of the vineyard, brought forth fruit, in various measures or degrees, but, in all, to life eternal, there to be gathered into the garner of the heavenly husbandman.

There is a period in the tide of life when the frail bark of humanity is peculiarly subject to be tossed on the billows of passion. When the ebb-tide of youth meets with the flood-tide of manhood, and the youthful mariner of life has to steer, with unsteady and unskilful hand, between the Scylla and Charybdis of many a besetting sin and strong temptation, without any spiritual Pharos or moral lighthouse to illumine the gloom of night, it is then that the daring youth, knowing not the land, discovers certain creeks, into which

he is minded, (like the governor of the ship that carried the apostle of the Gentiles,) if it were possible, to thrust himself for refuge. Casting away the anchor of hope, with which parental care and the anxieties of Sabbath school teachers had furnished him, withal loosing the rudder-bands, and all those other prudential restraints which older heads thought necessary for the voyage of life, he commits himself to the waves, hoists up the mainsails to the winds of an ever-shifting world, and makes towards what he, in fond expectation, considers the shore. But at this point he often falls into "the place where two seas meet, and where he is fain to run his vessel aground;" and where the hopes of years are, in an evil hour, broken with the violence of the waves, and nought remains but some few boards and broken pieces of the gay barque which so lately was launched amidst the prayers and praises of many friends; and which, frequently, is thus shipwrecked on the very shore of life, and within sight of the harbour in which it was carefully and prayerfully reared and received its parental outfit.

The exact period of transition—this chrysalis state of humanity—is not *absolute*, but varies with different minds, and under different circumstances. With all, however, there is a period when the youth becomes too proud to be *taught*, and yet gives, every day, evidence he is not *learned*—too haughty to be longer guided, and yet shews daily proof he still needs guidance—thinks he knows everything, or, at least, all that is necessary to know; and yet his life and conversation

proclaim that, without the true saving knowledge of Christ, he spiritually and scripturally knows nothing. At this, the most critical period of man's life, the Sabbath school is forsaken. It leaves him before the Church takes him up. Like the coffin of Mohammed, he is, for a time, suspended midway between heaven and earth, and a slight influence may propel him upwards or downwards. From the common error of assimilating the Sabbath school to that of the week-day, youth of both sexes, at this period, think themselves too old to attend the Sabbath class, and become ashamed to say their catechism and psalms with younger scholars. Having left the ordinary school, they think they ought now also to leave the Sabbath school. Their education they deem finished; whilst, in fact, it is only now rightly to begin. Self-education ought now to be their grand object. Before this they have been taught by others, now they are to teach themselves. Hitherto they have been examined by others; now they are to examine themselves. Formerly others too often were allowed to think for them; now they must think for themselves. *Practice* is now to be superadded on, if not to supersede *theory*. Others acted for them in *most* things; now they are called on to act for themselves in *many*,—on a stage too, which has many side-doors, and pit-falls, few foot-lights, and more prompters for evil than for good. Never did the youthful adventurer more need a monitor, and at no time is he less provided with such a sure counsellor; and, unfortunately, he is too

proud to acknowledge his want, or ask for help. What adds to the risk at this period is, that many young men now leave their parents' roof and kindly protection, and go to the busy towns,—the marts of trade, and, still more, the haunts of vice. Away from all the early associations of pious training, the virtuous mind becomes often a ready prey to "evil communications corrupting good manners;" and the mind first knows its own weakness by its frailty and fall; and the bitter tears of fond parents evidence the truth of the sacred text: "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

We have often been surprised, and had our heart sickened, on seeing certain prison statistics, wherein are arrayed fearful figures of the numbers who have become prisoners of guilt, and yet who once enjoyed the privilege of Sabbath school instruction. We are somewhat doubtful of the accuracy of such statistics. From very considerable acquaintance with prisons and prisoners, we know how little faith can be placed on the statements of the inmates of prison cells. They have a desire to appear to have been once in a better state, and truth is not on their lips, even when truth would sometimes better suit their interests. We would desire to know how long and how constant their Sabbath school attendance was—whether it was not for a few nights—now in this school, and then in that—some few nights during the dark nights of winter, and never when the light of summer evenings enticed to

a stroll in the green fields. Especially would we desire to know when their *occasional* attendance on the Sabbath school entirely ceased. It would be found, probably, to have been at that very period when attendance became most irksome, because then the rebellious spirit strove for full license, and did not like to hear of duties and pursuits uncongenial to depraved tastes and sinful pursuits. We have seen these alleged statistics arrayed as arguments against the benefits of Sabbath schools and religious instruction, and in favour of a purely secular education,—a temple without a divinity—an altar without a sacrifice—a throne without a sovereign. Doubting the premises, we wholly deny the conclusion. If these be facts, they are to be mourned over; but these are results, not, certainly, *in consequence*, but *in spite* of Sabbath schools. These facts may prove that the Sabbath school system is not so efficient and complete as it might have been; certainly it cannot prove that it is productive of evil, or that the teaching of godliness can ever produce its opposite. Carry out the argument to its full extent—for if valid in one branch, it is equally so in every one. The most complete sanatory care and precautions have not warded off disease and pestilence; then, why not discharge the Board of Health, and let every man, in matters of cleanliness, do what is right in his own eyes? Intemperance still stalks with giant stride throughout our land—why not cry a crusade against every society which inculcates temperance or abstinence? No law the

most stringent has wholly prevented any proscribed offence; but no one says the law is the *cause* of the offence, and seeks its abrogation. The continuance of the offence may call for a severer law, or the more strict enforcement of that which exists, but can never be urged as an argument against its opposing law.

Whilst doubting the amount of the results as given in certain statistics, and wholly denying the soundness of the conclusion drawn from it, we are willing to admit that some truth exists in these figures; and we seek to improve the fact, not, certainly, by lessening our exertions in Sabbath school teaching, but by increasing them all the more. Let us review the whole system, beginning with the spiritual fitness and scriptural qualifications of the teachers—the religious nature of the teaching and conduct of the classes in all their branches—the prayerful and unceasing watchfulness over the youth, alike on Sabbath and week-day—and to the matter more immediately on hand, the retaining of youth under Bible instruction until they become members of the Christian Church, and even beyond that period, if they incline, as many of them have been found to do, with profit to themselves.

There ought, therefore, to be one or more Bible or adult classes in every congregation. These ought to be presided over and taught by the minister himself, if that be at all possible; and where circumstances always or occasionally prevent this, the duty ought to devolve on an elder of the Church—a man “righteous before God, walking in all the commandments of the

Lord blameless;" of mature age and judgment; and especially, one who may have given test of ability,—being "one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity"—"vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, apt to teach; not a novice; and having a good report of them which are without."

A difference of opinion exists whether there ought to be one class for both sexes, or separate classes. It is thought by some that there is no greater reason for separation in the Bible classes than in the other and younger classes, or in church. But if kept separate, there may be greater freedom in dealing with many parts and observances in sacred history, and a more close application of the Gospel to the peculiar occupations, duties, and temptations of either sex.

The Bible classes ought to assemble in the church, session-house, or schoolroom, or some apartment separate from the junior classes. It may be found more convenient to fix another hour for meeting; and whilst the Sabbath hour should never be omitted, as most convenient and best fitted for such instruction, an hour on a week-night may be added, for the illustration of subjects cognate with the study of the Bible—such as the evidences of Christianity, natural theology, moral philosophy, and church history.

Whenever a youth has for a length of time been in the junior classes, and has reached the age and knowledge which fits him for the advanced, he ought to be transferred to the adult class, and the Bible should

then become his close and earnest study. The teacher may at once begin with Genesis, which, if duly improved, with the help of the flood of light which recent discoveries have poured on its sacred text, will be made the means of riveting the attention of the young. The Scriptures ought thus to be regularly read and studied, and care taken that nothing above ordinary comprehension is introduced. The class ought to be carried on step by step ; and to this end they ought each, in turn, to read verse by verse, (which, of itself, is no small mean of improvement and satisfaction ;) and they ought to be closely, but gently examined on every verse, as to the meaning and connexion, and on the explanations given. The grand object is to find Christ in every page—now shadowed forth in type and ceremony—now foretold in prophecy and vision—now sung in lofty praise—and anon personified in the lives of the patriarchs and holy men of old. The portions of the New Testament which reflect certain portions of the Old, should be taken and compared together ; the book of Leviticus, as expounded by the Epistle to the Hebrews, will be found a delightful employment to an inquiring mind. The teacher's object should now be, not so much to *impart knowledge*, as to *impress truth* on the youthful mind—to teach the young *to think* and *to act* for themselves—to aim at obtaining, not only their *moral assent* to the truths of the Gospel, but to raise in their hearts a *love* for those truths. This course of reading and study enables the teacher, with prudent

caution, to fortify the mind against the most common of the heresies and errors of the day. But great care must be taken not unnecessarily to introduce such topics. An objection may be stated, and fully understood in one short sentence, which will take a lengthened discourse to answer and refute, whilst the objection, after all, had nothing to recommend it but its subtilty. A handful of thistle seed carelessly thrown into a field of grain, may spread so wide as to baffle the farmer to uproot it without endangering his crop. The more advanced of the pupils may be encouraged to write out simple expositions of passages, or to put into written form the oral explanations given by the teacher on previous evenings. For this purpose a note-book may, with advantage, be kept by each pupil. There ought to be great caution taken as to reading aloud any prepared essays, or to give unnecessary praise, as tending to engender pride, and produce envy and discord. As the class ought now to assume the aspect of a prayer or fellowship meeting, considerable time should be devoted to worship; and it is not objectionable, that the more advanced young men, whose Christian knowledge and character are well ascertained, should be invited and encouraged to take part, occasionally, in conducting the devotional exercises. But here, too, great care must be taken to refrain from expressions of approbation. Whatever of criticism or direction there may be in this respect, it ought to be done with the individual alone.

Such adult classes are the proper *young communicants'* classes. A class got up a few weeks before the

administration of the Supper, is wholly inadequate for fully maturing the minds of those whose attention had not formerly been trained in religious exercises. We have known every successive communion receiving additions to the roll from adult classes ; and, what is delightful, the young persons still continuing, as regularly as before, their attendance at these classes, where they appeared to have received so much of profitable instruction and enjoyment.

When young men go, for the first time, from their father's house to some town, either for study at college, or to enter into the counting-house, parents are solicitous for introductions to persons who may shew them kindness, and attend to their domestic comforts, or advance their *temporal* interests. How seldom is an introduction to a godly minister, a Christian church, and a Sabbath class, sought for ! If such adult classes existed in every congregation, whether in town or country, what advantage would it be for the stranger youth ! Here at once would be an introduction to a circle of well-informed and pious companions of his own age, who might do much to make up for the absence of domestic ties and friendships—the want of which has often driven the young to seek a substitute in the indulgence of the baser appetites. Here, too, the youth would have something to think on during the week, of what he had heard, and something to prepare and anticipate for the coming Sabbath. He would have somewhat to fill his homebound letters, which would give greater interest and joy to godly parents than the most minute account of all the finery and

pageantry of this world's tawdry enjoyments and pastimes. He would feel that he was not a hermit in the wilderness of the crowded city—that the Church extended her protection around him—that there was a brotherhood in Christ far closer and dearer than any earthly union. Feeling that the Church cared for him, he would seek to bring no disparagement on her, or on the holy profession of Christianity. He would feel he had a character to maintain or to lose, and that others than his own kindred were deeply interested in his well-being; and as they have done to him, he will feel anxious to do to others. In due time he may become a teacher in the Sabbath school; and every new arrival from the country may be an opportunity to him to carry one straightway to the minister of Christ, to the Church of the living God, and to the Sabbath class, wherein his own mind had been so greatly improved, his spirit refreshed, and his character and resolutions for good confirmed. In every view, we urge on all connected with Sabbath schools to see that they have the adult or Bible classes, as being an essential to the completion of the curriculum of Sabbath school teaching; without which, the previous indoctrinating and training may stop short of the divine benefits it otherwise is so well calculated to ensure. The Bible is the only book which answers the poet's lay:—

*"All seasons suit this sacred page,
This holy lamp of heavenly truth—
'Twill cheer the tottering steps of age,
And guide the erring feet of youth."*

PART VIII.

VISITATION OF THE SCHOLARS.

"And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."—ACTS v. 42.

As the exercises of the sanctuary on the Sabbath are not designed to have their influence limited to that day, but to pervade the whole duties of the ensuing week, so, too, the Sabbath school should not have its scope circumscribed by the Sabbath hour. Religion is not a matter of fits and starts; but the sober and steady direction of the whole man in his whole life,—not a patchwork—a mosaic; but a pure tissue or fabric, woven throughout without seam or rent. It is a sad state of things for an individual when he puts on and takes off his religion with his Sabbath clothes. It is a melancholy record of a nation if its religion is only to be seen on its Sabbaths, though that blessed day be a good index, generally, of a nation's religion. With close attendance and attention at the Sabbath class, there springs up a closeness of affection between the teacher and the taught that is unknown in any school but that of Christ. But the Sabbath hour is too brief, and the period of youthful attendance too short, to acquire the fulness of knowledge, and intensity of

feeling, so necessary to the promotion of permanent good. This is to be effectually accomplished, under the divine blessing, by a regular and well-sustained system of domiciliary visitation. In this way not only does the teacher become more intimately acquainted with his pupils, and they with him, but the powerful and vital influence of a parent's affections and exertions is enlisted in the holy cause. In a vast proportion of Sabbath schools the parents are wholly unacquainted with those who have, so far, the religious culture of their children; and, in the same way, the teachers are ignorant of the peculiar domestic trials and temptations, advantages or disadvantages, with which their charge are surrounded. A knowledge of these, if not essential, is at least important to the proper cultivation of the mind, and the production, with the aid of God's Spirit, of real and abiding spiritual good.

The teacher's visits are of a twofold character,—the extraordinary or occasional; and the ordinary, or regular.

The former is of great importance to the regular attendance of the scholars, and their due preparation. One great occasion of the little real good hitherto accomplished by Sabbath schools, is the irregularity of attendance there. Variety or change is a reigning desire in youth, and steady perseverance has to be painfully acquired. There are youths who attend one night, and are absent the next, whenever opportunity offers, or an excuse can be obtained. There are others who run from school to school, until they pass through

the whole circuit of the Sabbath seminaries in the locality. They flit, as it were, from flower to flower, but gather sweets from none. Like the dove of the deluge, they roam over the waters and find no place for their foot, but unlike it, return no more to the ark. Not only is evil thus done to the individual, but to the system. It may be that, with an objectionable desire to augment the roll of attendance, the name of every truant-entrant finds a place there, and remains therein until the session ends. In this way these vagrant scholars find a place in more school-lists than one, and disturb the accuracy of the statistics of Sabbath schools. A regular roll-book should be kept, with the particular address to the dwelling-place of every scholar; and this roll should be called over every night, and have entered on it the marks of presence or absence; then, on any occasion of absence, a call should be made to the abode of the defaulter early next day if possible, but, at all events, early in the following week. It will sometimes be found that the parents were ignorant of the absence, and that the child had the ready lie—vouched, too, we have known, with borrowed text, or pretended psalm, or question—to satisfy the easily satisfied anxiety of careless parents. Let no teacher deem this visitation an excessively onerous duty. It may be somewhat so at the commencement; but if the parents and the child both know that absence will necessarily put the teacher to trouble, the number of such visits will speedily decrease. No trivial cause will be urged as an excuse; and wherever there is a

good one, means will be taken timely to communicate with the teacher, so as to prevent him having unnecessary trouble.

An arrangement ought to be had between schools, whether of the same church or society, or of different bodies in the same town or district, to check the pernicious habit of religious vagrancy, which, if begun in childhood, may cleave to the man, until, wandering from school to school, and from church to church, he may mournfully end in ignoring all communion with any church, or reverence for the Sabbath itself, and its divinely appointed duties. Where a youth has already joined a Sabbath class, and there has been no subsequent change of residence, or other circumstance, no other Sabbath teacher should seek to encourage his leaving his first class. A regular system of visitation, and a friendly course of organized communication between different schools, would effectually check this great evil, and add much to the efficiency of the Sabbath school system as a whole.

One important object of *occasional* visitation remains to be mentioned. Children are often absent • because of the various forms of serious sickness which are as incidental to youth as nipping frosts are to spring. A visit on such occasions, a friendly admonition, a short prayer, with the gift or loan of a tract or little book, has been found to work a charm on the plastic mind which receives from this, it may be, a first and indelible impression of the loveliness and kindness of Christianity.

The teacher who loses these blessed opportunities, which are ever and anon occurring, neglects the most advantageous season for sowing the divine seed. The scholar so visited is likely never to forget the act of kindness ; and, by his subsequent docility, will prove that he was not unworthy of the attention given, and that it has not been bestowed in vain. Not unfrequently are there "sicknesses even unto death." The carelessness of parents in such cases, or their unwillingness to give trouble to one who is to them a stranger, often prevents any notice or invitation being sent to the Sabbath school teacher. The first notice of the sickness may be when, in answer to the name on the *roll-call*, some half-smothered voice sobs out in a corner the melancholy response—"Dead." Such a word has often come to the heart of a teacher as a knell, and upbraiding conscience then spoke loudly of something that *might* have been done, but *was not* ; and the text painfully rises on the memory : "Inasmuch as you did it not to the least of these, you did it not unto me." Many of the best trophies of the Sabbath school have been gathered from early deathbeds ; and many more might have been chronicled had there been but method and system adopted throughout all its branches. Many a teacher has had ample reward in the last fond adieus and grateful thanks of a lamb early called unto the heavenly sheepfold ; and thus has had his own spirit invigorated, his zeal increased, and his piety enlivened. With the recital of such details he has enlisted the close attention of his little

flock ; and when, with moistened eyes, they often look at the void space and the empty seat, where lately sat their youthful companion in all the vigour of health, but now gone upwards to heavenly mansions, they silently breathe an aspiration that they may be kept from sin, and so living the life of the righteous, they, too, may die the death of the righteous, and their latter end be one of peace. The Sabbath school teacher who neglects this path of duty little knows the delight of which he deprives himself—the opportunity of good he omits—and the benefits he may be blessed to accomplish, not only to the little sufferer, but to many a weeping parent, mourning family circle, and neglected neighbourhood.

Important as is the *extraordinary* and *occasional* visitation, equally, if not more so, is the *ordinary* and *regular* visitation of the households to which the Sabbath scholars belong. The frequency of this duty depends on circumstances,—such as, the number of pupils, the circuit of their residences, and the time at command of the teachers. The importance of the duty, however, points to classes being so limited as to admit of its being properly accomplished ; and that the schools be, as far as possible, on the local or district system, which, with many other advantages, renders visitation much easier and efficient. With an earnest desire to do the work—with heartfelt pleasure in doing it—and with system as to the time and manner, it will be found attended with much more delight than difficulty. The parents will thus come

to take an interest in the Sabbath school, and through the school, in the church, and through the church, in all the varied duties and privileges of Christianity. They will learn that the Sabbath school and its teachers are not supplanters, to supersede them in their duty; but only Christian auxiliaries and friendly helps, that it may be all the better performed. Parents will conceive it a blot on their household if their children are not regular attenders at the Sabbath school, and, together with themselves, at the church to which it is attached, or rather, of which it forms a part. They will find themselves fellow-workers with the Sabbath school teacher, whom they will reckon their best family friend. They will see to it that their children are never absent unless prevented by God's providence. They will have pleasure in preparation of the lessons, and profit on their children's return in the evening, by hearing from their lips the varied illustrations of divine truth they have learned. The minister may, as he ought to, give his stated visit; but the extent of his field of visitation, and the incessant demands on his time and energies, necessarily render these visits "few and far between." The elders may and ought to visit, especially before each successive communion, all who are on the communion roll; but the visits of the Sabbath school teacher will be not the least valued, or unimproved of any. The Sabbath school teacher is the *pioneer of the Christian Church*. In him exists the bond of connexion between the parent and the school, and the school and

the church. He is the link which binds the parent to the church, and secures his hearty co-operation in its great work—"the godly up-bringing of the young."

To such and similar Christian appliances we look, as the great means, under the divine blessing, of removing that prolific source of moral and social evil—the disseverment of the various classes of society. It is Christianity which alone can amalgamate the diverse sections of the social mass into one harmonious whole. "The *poor* you always have," saith the Saviour; but equally true, in proportion, must there be always the *rich*. These classes are not antagonistic, but ought to be one in harmony and in sympathy, and are divinely instituted for the exercise of the Christian graces of charity on the one hand, and display of gratitude on the other. All nature is thus characterized,—“unity in diversity, and diversity in unity.” The classification of nature’s works is distinct, and yet it baffles the nicest discrimination to define the point where the one class merges and passes into the other. “Light comes from heaven, one and always the same, and yet it assumes different colours on the earth according to the objects on which it falls.” The arch that spans the heavens has the seven distinct colours of the prism; but the nicest instrument of the philosopher cannot, any more than the gaze of the peasant boy, define the line of demarcation between each diversified hue that makes up the unity of the whole. The crust of the earth consists of diverse strata, each placed above the other—the one shielding its inferior, and the other

supporting its superior—altogether, making the one solid mass of the globe. So ought it to be in the social fabric; but it is not. Whilst the lamented Baron Talfourd, in the town where he received his first breath, was dilating to the Grand Jury on the social evils of disunion, to which he traced the increase of crime and offence,—the sad evidence of which he had in the calendar before him,—his earnest and truthful statement was cut short by the hand of death, and “the judge from the judgment-seat was called to judgment.” The truths to which he was then giving utterance—too big for his loving heart, which burst with their awful importance—have forced themselves on the minds of many, and must, sooner or later, be solved.

The different classes of society have hitherto looked on each other too far apart. Like Jew and Samaritan, they have had no dealings the one with the other. They have only looked on each other to discover and parade faults, and to ignore every commendatory virtue. Each has looked favourably on his own bright side of the shield, and supposed all the vices of society to be blackened on the other side. Landlord and tenant, master and servant, employer and employed, producer and consumer, the tiller of the ground and the artificer in brass and iron, the dweller in towns and the inhabitants of rural districts,—each and all of them have thought *their* interests *opposed* to those of their neighbour, and that with the disadvantage, nay, the ruin of their supposed rival, have depended their own success and ultimate prosperity. Knowing only

one another by their evil deeds, too often they know each other only to hate. Hence combinations and strikes—agrarian commotions and all the nostrums of political quackery—the five political points of the Charter without any moral point—the architectural parallelograms of Owen without religious compass or square—the blasphemous absurdities, forgeries, and immoralities of the Mormons—and the thousand other panaceas, each of which is upheld to cure moral and social evils by merely plastering over the wounds. What is wanted is a more intimate knowledge of each other in every diversified class of life, and of the one remedy which can meet every evil by healing its source,—the wicked and sinful heart.

With this knowledge, much of misrepresentation and evil imagination will flee away as the birds of night before the rising sun. Poverty will often be found not *necessarily* allied with *vice*; and not unfrequently forming the genial nursery of Christian graces. Riches will sometimes be seen as not always the passport to peace and comfort, or fitted to be the sole object of the ambition of immortal man. It will be discovered, that there is an identity of interest between every class, which will, in time, induce a union of sympathy, and a co-operation in Christian work. The labouring classes will not then receive and accept the aid of the higher, as mere pensioners on their cold charity, but as partakers of their Christian privileges. It will then be seen that no part of the social body can suffer

or be injured, without all likewise suffering or being damaged. Experience does teach us, that to undermine the house of a neighbour must impair our own ; while strengthening the foundations of the one, must impart strength to the other.

The Christian visitation of the community—even of the very poorest—will be found one great mean of at once discovering the secret seeds of social evil, and of applying the adequate Christian remedies. We have thus gone somewhat aside from our main object, just because we know no better, effectual, cheaper, easier, or more extensive mode of Christian domiciliary visitation, than that afforded by a *corps* of well-qualified and earnest Sabbath school teachers, seeking, with singleness of heart, depending on the asked blessing of God, to bring all the young of the land early under the influence and power of Gospel teaching—so that, reverencing the Sabbath of the Lord—frequenting the house of God—reading and studying His holy Bible—giving themselves to Him who gave himself for them—they may be found “loving God with all their heart, their soul, their mind, and their strength, *and their neighbours as themselves.*” This is the only true mode of elevating a people, for it is God’s own plan ; and His plan can be the only efficacious one. It is only when this law of a perfect Christian love supercedes a law of terror, that the Gospel of God’s own Son will prevail ; and the angels’ anthem will then have its complete fulfilment : “*Glory to God in the*

highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men."

Then shall earth become

One land, one home, one friend, one faith, one law ;
Its ruler, God ; its practice, righteousness ;
Its life, peace ; for the one true faith we pray.
There is but one in heaven, and there shall be
But one on earth, the same which is in heaven.

PART IX.

THE LIBRARY—OFFICE-BEARERS—MISSION-BOX.

"Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk, and discourse, but to weigh and consider."—
LORD BACON.

"And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people."—EXODUS xviii. 25. "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business."—ACTS vi. 3.

"At the king's commandment they made a chest, and set it without at the gate of the house of the Lord. And all the princes, and all the people rejoiced, and brought in, and cast into the chest, until they had made an end. And when they saw that there was much money, the king's scribe and the high priest's officer came and emptied the chest, and took it, and carried it to his place again. Thus they did day by day, and gathered money in abundance."—2 CHRON. xxiv. 8, 10, 11.

No well-regulated and efficient Sabbath school can be without its library. The question in the present day is not, *shall* the people *read*? but, *what* shall they read? The people have decided for themselves, and in the affirmative, the first question. But, alas! they do not, and cannot decide wisely on the second. Evil-disposed men have become their caterers; and the press, that mighty engine for good or for evil, is too often enlisted in the cause of irreligion and immorality. *Knowledge is power.* But it is a power for evil as well as for good. It is the duty and privilege of the Christian to use all and every means within his power to counter-

act the flood of evil, and to lead the healing waters of a pure Christianity throughout the land, irrigating and making green the dry and parched places, and seeking to bring in the wastes and wilds, converting all into the "*garden of the Lord*."

A Sabbath school library, well selected, and well managed, may, with the divine blessing, be made an efficacious means of promoting and spreading a taste for wholesome reading, and giving an early bent to the youthful mind for the substantial, pure, and healthy cultivation of its powers. The desire ought not to be for an *extensive* and *varied* catalogue of books, but rather for a well-selected few, not to remain as lumber on the library shelves, some never taken out, and others sooner or later returned unopened and unread.

There ought to be as much scrutiny and scrupulosity in the selection and admission of a book, as of a teacher into a Sabbath school. Each book is a *silent teacher*; and just the more dangerous, that there are no counteracting influences ready at hand whilst the poison may be insidiously instilled into the juvenile mind. It is a great mistake to solicit and accept *miscellaneous* books from the general public. Many may be presented which, although not positively objectionable, yet are wholly unsuited to the age and taste of the readers; while others may be of very doubtful tendency. There exists the desire to swell the collection in numbers, and a natural unwillingness to give offence to kind friends by rejection; and therefore unsuitable gifts are reluctantly accepted, and politely

acknowledged, whilst other persons are thus invited to go and do likewise. For many reasons, all the books ought rather to be judiciously purchased, and not one book ordered and received but what has first obtained the approval of a committee of selection,—of which the minister should be one, and the other members persons of mature years and judgment, and some of whom have actually and carefully read the book. It would be a safe rule to admit no book but what can with propriety be read on the *Sabbath-day* as well as on week-days. The books being connected with a *Sabbath* school, imply as much ; and should this rule not be observed, the children are apt to be led into a course of Sabbath reading which may, in subsequent years, have a prejudicial tendency on the proper observance of that sacred day.

All mere fanciful and sentimental works of fiction, not of the high Scriptural and practical standard of the works of Bunyan, ought to be sternly excluded. Familiar Scripture illustrations, popular religious treatises which have obtained the sanction of years, Christian biographies of standard worth, and missionary narratives, form an excellent and safe collection. The works of the London Tract Society, such as their monthly volumes, may, in general, be held as in every way suitable for a Sabbath school library, and of themselves are ample to afford a sufficient supply. It will be advisable to have several copies of some of the most valuable and popular books. Much disappointment is produced by frequent asking for, and

long expectations of some strongly recommended book, at last obtained with a peremptory demand for a hasty perusal, and an early return. Received under these circumstances, the book is deprived of half its relish. The time for youthful reading is brief; and by such duplication of the best books, the circulation of *substantial* reading will be much increased, and a greater amount of good done than with a larger collection of single volumes of less standard merit.

Before leaving the subject of the proper selection of books, a caution may be given against the admission of certain classes of modern religious publications. There are several popular works which notoriously have been issued with the view of engaging the fervid feelings of youth in favour of the sensual draperies of the ritual of papal Rome, or of her younger sister,—that section of Episcopacy which, on the one hand, enthrones *the Church for Christ*, and, on the other, puts the *Priest* for the *Pope*; or, as has been well said, teaches *Churchianity* for *Christianity*, and, it may be added, inculcates *Form* for *Faith*. But there are other productions of the press, in great request and renown even in bodies called evangelical, which it would be well to keep from youth. We find some of the popular religious works of the day in which the Godhead is divided into parts most incongruous, if not antagonistic. God the Father is often represented as an inexorable divinity, who, in the stern attribute of His justice, only sends vengeance on the sinner; whilst God the Son comes in between as a being all clemency

and mercy ; and, regardless of the high behests of justice, appeases the wrath of His Father, and devotes himself, like some hero in classic page, to a voluntary death to save mankind. With such works how would correspond such Bible texts as these?—"He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things?" "For He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin;" "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son;" "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ;" "For God so loved the world, that He sent His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Another class of books are also reprehensible, which, taking the prodigal son, the thief on the cross, Saul going up to Damascus, and the jailer at Philippi, as the only proper types of Christian life, ignore all the Samuels, Davids, and Timothies of Scripture. They make little of the child brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, "growing in stature, and in favour with God and man." Those who are alone to shine as stars in the spiritual firmament are, according to them, those who, having spent the earliest and best portion of their lives in the service of Satan, have suddenly been arrested in their wicked career, "as brands snatched from the burning," and brought to Christ even at the eleventh hour. Far be it from us to limit the power of divine grace, or to question the

operations of the Holy Spirit. We are commanded "in the morning to sow the seed, and in the evening to withhold not our hand; for we know not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." Such trophies of late conversion we dare not doubt, and greatly rejoice in any well-attested instance; yet, withal, we humbly hold these are *exceptional* cases. God's commands are: "Remember *now* thy Creator *in the days of thy youth*, while the evil days come not," (*not after the evil days have come*;) "Feed my *lambs*;" "Suffer *little children* to come unto me, and forbid them not;" "*Train up a child* in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." We can easily perceive that the reading of books which exhibit the prodigal youth as the best qualified for the Christian man, and *sin* as the best schoolmaster to lead on to holiness, might, unless divine grace restrained, produce habits of thought and inclinations to evil, and encourage procrastination—so natural to mankind—which would prove most hostile to an early enrolment in the ranks of the followers of Christ.

There are some minor details as to the management of Sabbath school libraries which are not unworthy of notice. Where at all possible, the giving out and receiving of books should be on a week-night, in preference to the Sabbath. It might be arranged, where instruction in church-music is given, to make it on the same night. In larger classes, or where several schools are supplied from the same library, it ought

to be arranged to have the attendance of the separate sexes on different nights. As a fortnight is not more than sufficient with the young for perusal of an average volume, the boys could be supplied with books the one week, and the girls on the other. An arrangement for a similar allocation of classes, where there are many such, will be found of benefit. Where the distribution is made on the Sabbath, the books ought to be taken in at the commencement, and the issue made after the conclusion of the meeting. If the young are allowed to keep their library books during the time of teaching, a continual diversion of their attention will take place, greatly to the disturbance of good order.

In the mechanical management of the library, the adult males will be found very useful; and such position should be given as a reward for regular attendance and general good conduct. In every matter, however trivial, which belongs to the Sabbath school, the apostolic advice ought to be rigidly acted upon: "Let all things be done decently and in order."

There remains one important matter connected with the library which it is necessary prominently to notice. No person has been long in connexion with such establishments without having been grieved, not only with the great tear and wear of the books, but the extraordinary amount of loss. This adds greatly to the expense of the library. But a far more serious matter is little thought of,—that is, the moral detriment done to the defaulters. The habit of carelessness

in the use of the books—marking them with dog's ears—scribbling on them—tearing out the pictures, and such like misuse, are very cursorily examined, and little heeded. These habits, thus early begun, are likely to attach to, and grow with, the man. The youth ought, oft and again, to be warned and advised on the subject. Every book on being given out, and again on its return, should be carefully examined in the presence of the reader, and every defect pointed out; continuation of misconduct should appropriately be visited with deprivation of the misused privilege of reading. The knowledge of such continued scrutiny would impress on the readers habits of order and propriety, which may be of great consequence in their after life; in the same way as the too often total absence of all such scrutiny will engender habits of carelessness and indifference of the most pernicious kind for the property of others, whilst it greatly increases the annual expense of the library, which, at the end of every session, is found to be a mass of books without binding, some wanting leaves, and others deprived of plates, and all of them tattered and torn, soiled and marked with the fingers of careless, indifferent, or malicious persons, whom to call readers, would be an abuse of the word.

A more serious evil arises in the loss of books, or in their being purloined. The most valuable are generally those which are found awaiting on the general scrutiny. It is notorious that many Sabbath school books have found their way into the pawnbroker's or

old book-stalls. It has been said, that some young people have dated their first step into the paths of dishonesty by the ready opportunity thus afforded them. The facility, in large towns, of passing from school to school, opens a wide field for this wicked system. There ought, therefore, to be kept a very regular roll of the issue and return of books. None ought to be admitted to read until after some considerable probationary attendance at school. The dwelling-place of each reader ought to be inserted in the library book ; and immediately on the time elapsing without return of the book, the scholar ought to be applied to, and, if absent from school, a visit made at his dwelling-house. Such a close system of inspection is necessary for the permanency of the library, but still more for the proper care of the morals of the young, and their protection from temptation to sinful propensities. The woodcutter on the banks of the Jordan mourned for the loss of the axe, not because of its value, but that it was not his own,—it was borrowed. Young people ought to be taught that honesty is a sacred principle, and not dependent on the measure of value.

There are several office-bearers generally connected with the management of Sabbath schools, or the society with which they are in union. In the church or parish scheme, which will ever be found the most effectual, the clergyman ought to be the president. Every person connected with the management of societies will bear testimony, that of all the officials

on whom mainly rests the conduct of an association, with its consequent prosperity or adversity, that person is the Secretary. He is the personification of the society. He must be identified with its very existence—the society individualized. It is a mistake to suppose that he is the mere amanuensis of the society, and recorder of its procedure,—that is but the mechanical part of his duty. With him ought to originate and be matured every measure, and with him rests its being carried into full and correct operation. His duties are not confined to certain days and meetings. He is the representative and organ of the society at all times, to whom references can always be made for information and help. His first qualification is, decided piety and love to the Christian cause and work in which he is engaged. Next to that, he ought to be of business habits; and if so, it matters not how many demands be otherwise made on his time. It is the idle who complain most of the want of time, because they know not how to improve it. It is the most busy who do most work, and have still spare time to do more. They are masters, and not slaves of their time, and improve it with a deep sense of its influence on a coming eternity. Their minds are intellectual arches—they become the stronger with the weight and pressure above.

There is no great evil in combining the office of Treasurer with that of Secretary; and sometimes, where the individual is very efficient, there is an advantage in such combination, and a disadvantage by a

separation and multiplication of offices, especially as it sometimes has happened the office-bearers are unequally yoked. There ought to be no great need for a heavy treasury. But whoever has its command ought to be a Christian man—trustworthy, and of undoubted credit—of easy access, and of business habits—a steward who can render at all times a good account of his stewardship.

In large schools with several classes, or in societies with several schools, a superintendent is an indispensable officer, especially in the former. His duty is, to see every class in its proper place in proper time—each teacher duly at his or her post—or, any unfortunate vacancy occurring, the place supplied, for the time, as efficiently as possible—he himself being ready to take a class in every such emergency, though his duty ought rather to have a general superintendence of the whole classes and schools. With him, in absence of the minister, should rest the conducting of the devotions, and therefore he ought to be a man of mature age and standing in the Church, “righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.”

Where there are many schools connected with a society, an order of visitors is highly necessary, who might visit and report on one or two schools every month. Such regular visits are of advantage to the teacher as well as the taught, and form the only mode by which a proper superintendence of these schools can be steadily maintained. Christian men of age

may be thus usefully employed; and an occasional short address, with a share in conducting the devotional exercises, will add greatly to the interest and welfare of the schools.

There is one important piece of Christian machinery which ought never to be wanting in the Sabbath school,—this is the *missionary box*. There ought to be no personal application for money even for this, the best of purposes. Missionary cards are of doubtful expediency; and the setting or hounding out the children to solicit money from friends and the general public, is obviously inexpedient, and productive of evil to the young. Such applications have often been resisted with bad temper poured out on the suppliant, and often extended to the cause for which the supplication was made. The cause and importance of missions ought often and impressively to be brought before the young, and their attentions directed, and their sympathies awakened, by the heart-stirring recitals of missionary enterprises. They ought to be told that they have an opportunity of silently giving to the box, unknown and unseen by all but by the God who sees in secret, and rewards openly. Many, perhaps most of Sabbath scholars, are in poor circumstances, and have not much to give.

We have known, where a collection was openly and ostentatiously made, that poor scholars of a timid mind absented themselves for the night, rather than expose to others their inability to give; and others have

urgently demanded, and reluctantly obtained from parents and friends very unable, and perhaps more unwilling, to give, the necessary sum required. This is not to give *freely* to the Lord ; and it is the cheerful giver whom the Lord loveth. The spirit of the humble widow with her mite, and not the proud Pharisee with his lordly tithe of all, is that which should be engendered in the Sabbath school. The Lord of the Christian vineyard will bless more the few pence given from the sincere heart, with love to Christ and ardent desire for the salvation of the world, than many pounds unwillingly given to swell a subscription list—a Christmas offering—or to enhance the character of any church or school as eminently Christian, because eminently profuse in the silver and gold which are the Lord's.

Let the *hearts* of the children be early and earnestly indoctrinated into the holy cause of Christian missions at home and abroad, as the great object and privilege of the Christian Church and of Christian people, and the sure consequence will be, that each one will freely give according to ability. But merely to urge the *act* of giving, without implanting the *motive* in giving, is fruitless. In the one way, there may be an occasional gush or outburst of money, but ceasing with the special occasion and impulse which called it into action, and followed with a long season of inaction. In the other, there will be created or opened up a steady perennial stream of Christian supply, flowing from the ever full

fountain of Christian love and sympathy. It is only when the soul is thus itself enlightened that it yearns to send the light of Gospel truth to others; and the children shall then, with the heart, sing,—

“Shall we whose souls are lighted
By wisdom from on high,—
Shall we to man benighted
The lamp of life deny :”

PART X.

CONCLUSION.

“ Little hesitation need be felt in describing the Sunday school as a *religious institution*. This, indeed, it has been from its very commencement ; for whatever may have been the primary vague design of its benevolent originator, certain it is that the spirit which impelled the movement forward so triumphantly, and which so vigorously still ensures its progress, was, and is the *offspring of religious zeal*. ”—*Census Report*, 1851, p. 71.

THE institution of Sabbath schools cannot boast of antiquity ; neither is it of yesterday. More than half a century has passed since its origin. Like many great discoveries in moral and natural science, it had somewhat of an accidental beginning ; and owed its origin to the benevolence of one or two Christian individuals.

In a morning of the year 1780, a worthy man—Robert Raikes by name—a bookseller and publisher in Gloucester, was walking in a suburb of that city where dwelt the workers at the great pin manufactory of Alderman Weaver. He was filled with concern on seeing many groups of ragged and squalid children at play in the street. The good man made inquiry at a neighbouring woman as to whom these children belonged, and their habits. The woman replied,—“ Ah ! sir, if you saw this part of the town on a Sunday you would be shocked indeed ; for then the streets are filled

with multitudes of these wretches, who, released on that day from employment, spend their time in noise and riot, playing at chuck, and cursing and swearing in a manner so horrid as to convey to any serious mind an idea of hell rather than any other place." Immediately it entered into the mind of Raikes to make an effort to gather, in these outcasts on the Sabbath day. On stating his plan to several persons, objections were neither few nor feeble. At length he resolved to try his benevolent scheme: "I shall at least *try* what *can* be done," was his memorable answer to all objectors. There is a charm in that little word "*try*." Its neglect has rendered many a splendid theory useless; and its steady application has realized success against much discouragement and opposition. It is synonymous to the Lord's command: "*Strive* (*agonize*) to enter in at the straight gate."

Raikes stated his scheme to the curate of the parish, the Rev. Thomas Stock, who at once saw its importance, and his duty in the matter as a Christian minister; and he therefore heartily co-operated with Raikes. A helpmeet from the softer sex is never wanting when Christian benevolence pleads, and another labourer was found in Miss Cook,—who became afterwards the wife of a Methodist pastor, named Blackburn. An arrangement was made with four females to receive as many children as could be persuaded to attend them on Sabbaths to receive instruction; and for which each schoolmistress was to receive the sum of *one shilling* for their day's labour. Publicity was given to the plan

and its early success, through the columns of the *Gloucester Journal*, of which Mr. Raikes was editor and publisher. One of the first teachers was James King, who died in Gloucester, full of years, in 1832. How the Lord has blessed the day of small things! The institution personified might well take to itself the language of the patriarch, and say: "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; *for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands.*"

In the *Census* of 1851, there occurs the following remarkable passage with reference to the Sunday schools of England:—

"Popular education may be said to be almost entirely the creation of the present century. The records and the recollections which describe society fifty years ago, bear testimony to a state of ignorance and immorality so dense and general, that if any member of the present generation could be suddenly transported to that earlier period, he would be scarcely able, notwithstanding many abiding landmarks, to believe himself in England, and would certainly regard the change which half-a-century has witnessed in the manners of the people, as but little short of the miraculous. Comparison is scarcely possible between the groups of gambling, swearing children, whom Raikes of Gloucester, in 1781, with difficulty collected in the first Sunday school, and any single class of the 2,400,000 scholars who now gather with alacrity, and even with

affection, round their 318,000 teachers.* In contemplating the various agencies by which, throughout the intervening period, the habits of the people have been so conspicuously improved, it is of course impossible to assign to each its positive share of influence in accomplishing this change; but it may very safely be affirmed, that no small portion of the happy transformation is attributable to the vast accession which has been effected in the number of our daily and *Sunday* schools."

"The *latter* took precedence in the educational race. The work which the Gloucester publisher originated, rapidly advanced. Religious bodies, more especially Dissenters, heartily embraced the plan; and the present century has seen the system so extended, that scarcely any regular place of worship now existing is without its Sunday school."†

A fitting trophy has lately been published to the memory of Raikes, being the following transcript from the fly-leaf of a well-worn Bible:—"This Bible was presented to me by Mr. Raikes, at the town of Hertford, January 1781, as a reward for my punctual attendance at the Sunday school, and good behaviour

* At the time of the Census, there were in England and Wales, 23,514 Sunday schools, with 2,407,642 scholars, taught by 318,135 teachers; and there were 1,817,490 scholars in attendance on the Sabbath of the Census. The difference between the *numbers* on the roll and those in attendance on that Sabbath, when there would likely be a desire in certain quarters to insure a full number, is sadly instructive of a want in method and organization.

† The Census educational returns for Scotland are so obviously worthless, that no reference can be made to them for this or any purpose whatever.

when there ; and after being my companion fifty-three years,—forty-one of which I spent in the sea-service, during which time I was in forty-four engagements, received thirteen wounds, was three times shipwrecked, once burnt out, once capsized in a boat, and had fevers of different sorts fifteen times,—this Bible was my consolation, and was neatly bound for me by James Bishop of Edinburgh, on the 26th of October 1834, the day I completed the sixtieth year of my age, as witness my hand." This catalogue of the perils of an "*Ancient Mariner*" forcibly reminds the Bible student of the enumeration of apostolic sufferings; and may it not be hoped, that, taught from the fountain of all truth, he may, like the apostle, have felt, that if "he must needs glory, he will glory of the things which concern his infirmities?"

With this rapid historical sketch we will wind up these thoughts on Sabbath schools by a few brief observations on the *importance*, *responsibility*, and *reward* of the work of the Sabbath school teacher.

The more the teacher feels the *importance* of his work, and his own natural weakness for its arduous and responsible duties, the more anxious and prayerful will he be in its performance ; and the more likely will he find his success in the realization of the promises : "My strength is sufficient for thee;" and, "My strength is perfected in thy weakness." Christ is the *Great Teacher*, whom multitudes followed and surrounded; and "He *taught* them many things by parables;" "and the people were astonished at His

doctrine, for He TAUGHT them as one that had authority, and not as the Scribes." The commission of our Divine Saviour was: "Go ye and *teach* all nations, *teaching* them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." True to the command, the apostles, soon after their Master's ascension, were laid violent hands on at Jerusalem by the priests and Sadducees, "being grieved that they *taught the people*, and preached through Jesus Christ the resurrection from the dead." In like manner, we find, in the Church at Antioch, where first the name of Christian was given, that there were "certain prophets and *teachers*." "Paul also, and Barnabas, continued in the same city, *teaching* and preaching the word of the Lord, with *many others also*; and for "a whole year they assembled themselves with the Church, and *taught much people*." So, too, the Apostle to the Gentiles continued at Corinth for a year and six months; and in Ephesus, Paul "disputed daily in the *school of one Tyrannus*, and continued by the space of two years, *teaching* the Word of God among them." And, finally, the book of apostolic actions concludes with the fact, that "Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, (at Rome,) and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and *teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ*."

It was a noted saying of Luther, that he "knew not whether to give precedence to the office of the holy ministry or to that of *teaching*;" and Dr. Arnold remarked, that "the business of a schoolmaster, no

less than of a parish minister, is the care of souls." The Census commissioners sum up their remarks on Sunday schools in these words: "Indeed, it may be fairly questioned whether Sunday school instructions do not exercise an influence in moulding the religious mind of the community more extensive and more potent than proceeds from all the pulpits in the land."

The Sabbath school teacher can never fully realize the importance of his work, and his duty therein, except in the *light of eternity*. The more he seeks to realize the holiness of God—the enormity of sin—the value of the soul—and the preciousness of salvation, the more will his heart yearn over lost souls, and his desire be to add new trophies to the Cross, by bringing the knowledge of Christ to those who know Him not. "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God, peradventure, will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth, and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

If the Sabbath school teacher aim at any lower standard than the salvation of the soul, by the teaching of that "faith without which no one can please God," and that "holiness without which no one can see God," he need not expect any real spiritual and abiding success in his labours, however arduous. It is by teaching the young their duties to God—His love to them, and their Christian privileges—that the young will best learn and appreciate their duties to

man, and their privileges as citizens of this world. The best guarantee for loyalty to an earthly sovereign, is fidelity to the King of kings. The surest guide to obedience to fathers according to the flesh, is devout resignation to the will of "our Father who art in heaven." The safest course of instruction in submission to earthly laws, is implicit obedience to Heaven's own law. All the duties of life, in every social form and variety, are all comprehended in the new commandment which Christ gave; "Love one another;" and the high motive for its practical application is the heavenly argument: "As Christ loved us, and gave himself an offering for us." In a word, let the teacher uniformly look on every child committed to his charge, not as a mere body, fitted for the world that is; but as a *soul to be saved or lost*, and in whose salvation or loss he may become an important instrument,—his teaching being either a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. Let his constant aim be that of the apostle: "My little children, of whom I travail in birth until Christ be formed in you."

The *importance* of the office of the Sabbath school teacher, and the momentous nature of his duty, at once raises the other matter of his *responsibility* in undertaking its duties. A secular teacher would feel ashamed if those whom he sent into the world as fully taught in the branches he professed to teach, and thereby qualified to enter on the duties of this life, were found ignorant of its first principles, and its simplest and most ordinary practice. He would justly share

in the disgrace which his pupils, by such ignorance, might draw on themselves; whilst he takes delight, and receives honour and enjoyment in all those who, in after life, prove to the world that they were early and well instructed by him in its learning and duties. It was a wise saying of the ancient painter, when remonstrated with for the great time taken by one painting, that "*he was painting for posterity.*" So, too, let the Sabbath school teacher steadily remember, that he is *teaching for eternity*. The statuary labours to chisel his marble into the fairest similitude of graceful form; but the Christian workman seeks to impart to the dull and lifeless soul the breath of life, that it may again become a living spirit,—the renewed image of the living and life-giving God. It is not the body, soon to perish, which is the object of his care,—“what it shall eat, and what it shall drink, and wherewithal it shall be clothed.” But knowing that “man does not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth from God,” and “that the kingdom of God is not meats or drinks, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,”—he seeks anxiously, earnestly, and prayerfully, to feed and nourish the immortal souls of his little ones with the bread of life, and so clothe the never-dying spirit with the spotless robe of Christ’s righteousness.

To those who are intended to sojourn in the land of their birth, and there to earn their daily bread, it may be well chiefly to direct their attention and studies to the laws, the language, and the circumstances of

the land of their birth and future dwelling-place. To those who are about soon to take their departure to another distant and far different land, it is more wise to indoctrinate them in the history, the laws, the language, and the natural productions of the land of their *adoption* rather than that of their birth, so that they may not be landed on its shores ignorant of every fact concerning their new dwelling-place, with everything to learn to enable them to become citizens thereof, or to enjoy its manifold advantages. So, too, man is here but a stranger and a pilgrim; and his wisest study and best employment is to learn the language of the heavenly Canaan, the pursuits of its inhabitants, and the laws of Immanuel's land, the privileges and enjoyments of that city beyond the Jordan of death, whose foundations are righteousness, and whose builder and maker is God.

Every Sabbath should bring the Christian pilgrim a Sabbath-day's journey nearer his heavenly home, and make him feel so much farther ahead in the wilderness of life; so that he should be found less entangled with the cares and anxieties of his earthly home, and of the business of life; and his affections being where his treasure is, they should be more and more spiritual, more and more heavenly. It should be the anxious desire of every Sabbath teacher to be more like his God and his Master, and to advance Zionward, carrying with him his little flock; and that it never may be said of him: "With whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?" It is a good old say-

ing, that if we go the journey towards heaven, we must seek to have companions by the way ; and let it therefore be the earnest and prayerful desire of all teachers to labour so that, entering into their reward, they may be able to say : “ Here are we, and here are those whom thou hast given us, and none of whom are lost.”

Sabbath school teachers will, indeed, have formed a low estimate of their calling who seek their reward on earth. It is not altogether to be despised to have the countenance and support of good men—the worthy followers of the Lamb—and the approbation and praise of the churches. It is of far greater value to have the approval of the conscience enlightened, through the grace of God, by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. But Christian teachers, acting under *heavenly responsibilities*, look solely to *heavenly rewards*. They believe, “ that whatever a man soweth, *that* shall he also reap ; and that he who soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption ; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. They weary not in well-doing, knowing that in due season they shall reap if they faint not.” They do their Master’s work in faith, they wait their Master’s time in patience, and in hope they realize the season, when, standing in judgment, they shall receive the reward of the faithful servant : “ Well done, thou good and faithful servant ; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord ;” and,

“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least
of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

“Ye blessed of my Father, come ; ye just,
Enter the joy eternal of your Lord ;
Receive your crowns, ascend and sit with me
At God's right hand, in glory evermore.”

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